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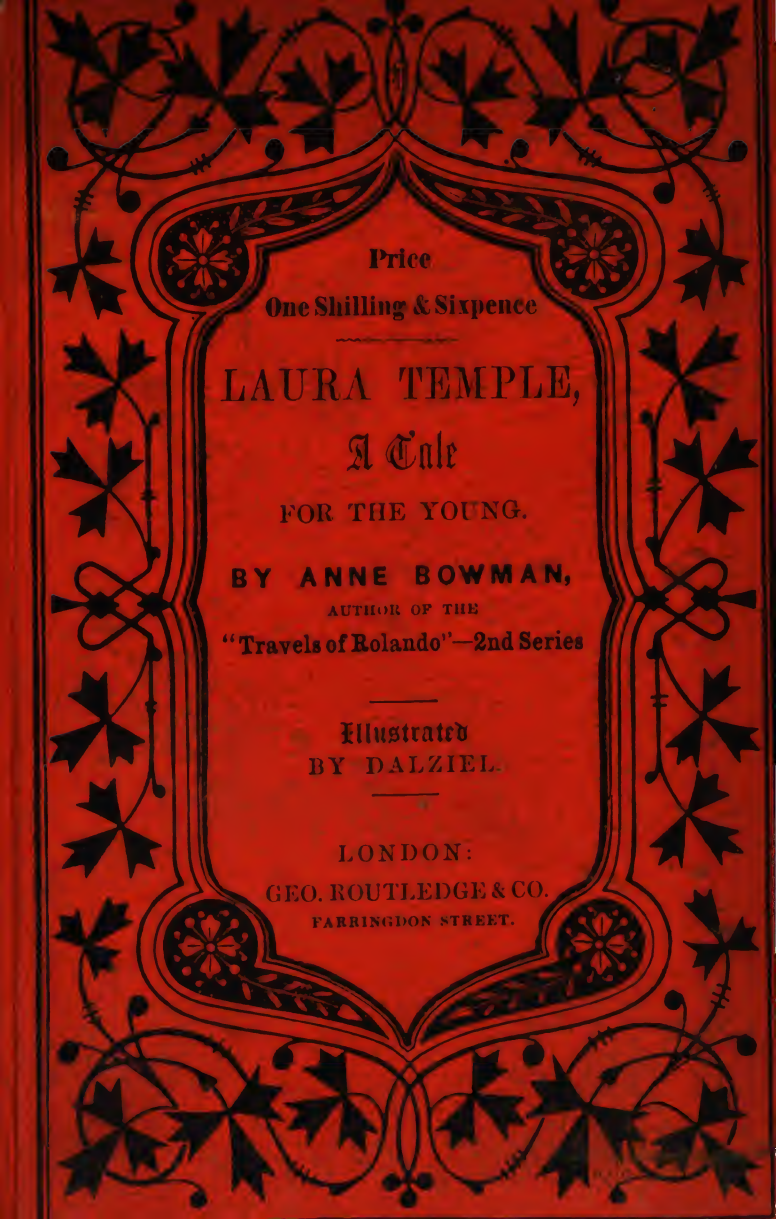
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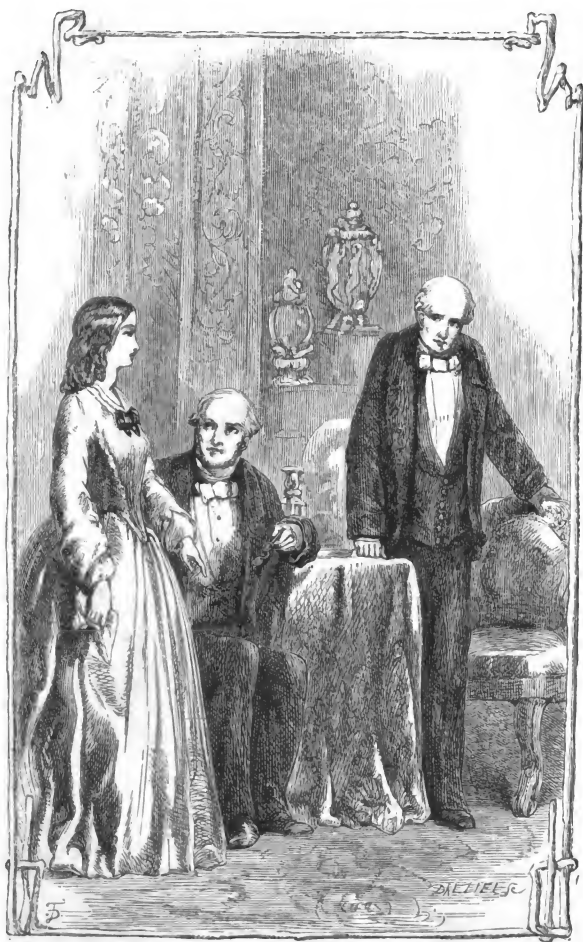
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Laura Temple.—P. 74.

LAURA TEMPLE

A TALE FOR THE YOUNG



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LAURA TEMPLE.

A Tale

FOR THE YOUNG.

"And Fancy flings around life's dawning powers
Her flowery wreaths, till sober Truth lies hid
In that enthralling bondage."



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LAURA TEMPLE.

CHAPTER I.

And thou, my pretty gentle bird, hast fled thy prison-hold!
The mighty spark of life that warm'd thy tiny breast, is cold.
Thy little home is tenantless, deserted evermore,
For none could fill thy vacant place, that can the charm restore.

ANON.

"WHAT a miserable creature I am," cried Laura Temple, rushing suddenly into her brother's study. "Oh, my dear Godfrey! conceive my despair. Those vile maids have murdered my angelic Jauna."

"I am really sorry, Laura, for the death of your pretty bird," said Godfrey quietly; "but murder is a grave charge to bring against a fellow creature."

"I beg, Godfrey," said the weeping girl, "that you will not add to my affliction by being so precise. It was most certainly the fault of those wretches. They allowed Selim to enter the room, and the ruthless monster rushed on my precious darling, and tore him to pieces."

"Selim is a gentle specimen of the feline tribe, my dear sister," replied Godfrey, "yet he could not resist the sore temptation of the moment, and his hereditary taste for delicate morsels of game. If a delicious peach

were placed before you, dearest, would you not think it rather hard if the enjoyment of the *bonne bouche* were pronounced a crime?"

"Now, Godfrey," said Laura indignantly, "you are arguing like a conceited schoolboy. How can you compare the eating a senseless peach with the bloody deed which has consigned my darling Jauna to a cruel death?"

"I never thought of comparing the devoured," said the good-humoured Godfrey, "but the devourers. Selim was no more actuated by evil passion when he devoured your bird, than you would be, if you were to eat the peach. It is just human nature and cat nature. It is probable, moreover, that he was hungry. So his only error seems to be that of mistaking his *table d'hôte*. Now don't think, Laura, my darling, that I do not grieve for poor little Jauna's luckless end. I am sorry for it, but I am not miserable. Nay, I mean to go to Lady Seymour's ball to-night, and to be very merry; and I do hope that your sorrow will subside before evening, and that you will be induced to join the party."

"Of course, Godfrey," exclaimed Laura, "I must go. The ball,—the charming, the enchanting ball,—how could you think I would give it up? Minna Seymour would have no pleasure if I were not by her side. My beloved Minna, friend of my soul! Is she not a fascinating little angel?"

Godfrey laughed at Minna's elevation to the angelic nature, but felt some pain at Laura's exaggerated ex-

pressions and changeable humour, which he could scarcely comprehend. There was in fact a striking difference in the character of the brother and sister, the result of different systems of education.

Laura had been brought up entirely by an aunt, who had taken her while yet an infant, when the delicate health of Mrs. Temple required a change of climate. Laura was even now only a visiter in the house of her parents, and her suffering mother saw, with sorrow, defects in her child, which she had not health and energy to correct. Miss Temple, the aunt, was an elegant and accomplished woman; but living much alone, enthusiastically fond of poetry and music, with little solid knowledge, she was but an indifferent instructress for a warm-hearted lively girl, like Laura. Fondly attached to her niece, Miss Temple could not bear that any one should assist in her education. At thirteen, Laura had the accomplishments of a girl of twenty; but in useful knowledge, in knowledge of the world, in knowledge of herself, and in that true knowledge which is beyond price, she was lamentably deficient.

The course of study which Miss Temple pointed out, and her niece eagerly followed, consisted of music, dancing, and the reading of English and Italian poetry, and of French romances. From these works she had acquired such a reliance on the guidance of her imagination, such an exaggerated mode of expressing her sentiments, that the love of simple truth had almost disappeared within her.

Laura was encouraged in the use of her poetic style, by the admiration of her aunt, who was unfortunately herself addicted to hyperbolical expressions. Laura soon perceived this difference between her companions and herself, and enjoyed the distinction. She felt proud of her superiority, and despised what she considered the dulness and stupidity of the children she met in society.

Godfrey was two years older than his sister. When his parents left England, he had been sent to an excellent school. His holydays had been spent at the house of Mr. Vavasour, the vicar of Westley, a brother of Mrs. Temple's. The vicar, a man of learning and piety, gentle in manner, but firm in character, had assisted his nephew in overcoming his faults, and inspired him with a love of noble and virtuous aims. In another year, Godfrey was to enter at Cambridge; and he was now diligently preparing himself for his career at the university.

Godfrey, with the natural vivacity of youth, looked forward with pleasure to the juvenile ball at Seymour House. Minna Seymour was his chosen friend; and he often wished that his sister Laura more closely resembled her in character. Beautiful, gentle, graceful, and well-informed, her mind was the abode of purity and truth. Her manner was so quiet and simple, that it was astonishing how Laura Temple could be so much attached to one so unlike herself as Minna Seymour.

"Certainly," Laura observed to her brother,— "certainly, Minna is too grave and sententious; but I am

so captivated with her loveliness, and charmed with her good-nature, that I perfectly adore her; and forget she is not endowed with the resplendent gift of genius."

In the exciting anticipation of the ball, poor Jauna's unhappy fate was entirely forgotten; and it is much to be feared, that the neglected remains of the luckless warbler were sepulchred in the stomach of Selim the slayer.

Very nicely dressed, and looking and feeling some years older than she really was, Laura stepped into the carriage which was to convey her brother and herself to Seymour House, which was two miles distant from Templeton Court. She was in such exuberant spirits, that Godfrey saw he need have no apprehensions from her despair; and he now felt more alarm from her anticipations of pleasure, which seemed to him too extravagant to be realized.

"What delight! what ecstasy I have in going to a ball!" exclaimed the excited girl; "and to-night every thing combines to make the enjoyment perfect. Look at this exquisite silk. Its hue surpasses the tint that the most lovely rose of summer can show. I wish I could wear this dress always,—I did not believe that even Aunt Temple's unequalled taste, could select any thing so beautiful But what are you thinking of, Godfrey? Are you dreaming of Mount Green school, and of your pompous, prosy, pedantic master?"

"No, Laura," said Godfrey, "I deny the charge *in toto*. I had not a thought of Mount Green, nor of good Dr. Penn, in my head. Nor was I admiring the

beauty of your dress ; but I must tell you, my dear little sister, that I was thinking your admiration of it not well applied. The work of man can never surpass, can never equal in beauty, the work of God's hand. Remember 'the lilies of the field,' and that our blessed Lord himself declared, that 'Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.'"

"How can you, Godfrey," said his sister in great agitation, "how can you wish to prove that I am wicked, because I admire my aunt's rich present? Of course I know that roses and lilies cannot be formed by the hand of man—but if you weigh all my words in that pedantic Mount Green manner, I must decline conversation with you."

"Nay, Laura dear," said he tenderly, "I only wish *you* to weigh your words, and not to use so many superlatives. But you will call me pedantic again. Moreover here we are at Seymour House, so compose yourself ;—and now I *will* think of the ball."

A very pretty scene that merry ball was. A crowd of smiling little girls from six to sixteen years old, and a joyous group of holyday school-boys, all well dressed, and well behaved, were talking, laughing, and dancing, with the rare relish of youth. Laura's dress was duly approved, her dancing still more so ; and Harry Beverley declared to his cousin Minna Seymour, that her little friend was a nice little girl, and that if she had been a few inches higher, he should have been in some danger of losing his heart. Minna, who was fourteen years old, and tall of her age, smiled at her

school-boy cousin's danger, and thought that Laura would not have been much gratified if she had been aware of her distinction as "a nice little girl."

"Pray, Godfrey," said Harry, turning to his friend and school-fellow, "how old is your pretty sister? She talks poetry like a young lady of genius, and looks like a nursery cherub."

"She is certainly not a nursery cherub," answered Godfrey; "she is thirteen, one year younger than yourself, my noble friend."

"Why, what a pretty Titania she is," said Harry. "Cousin Minna might pass for her mamma; and very like a mamma she looks just now, administering creature-comforts to those hungry babes, who ought to have brought their nursery-maids with them. Do you hear what I say, Lady Grave-airs?"

"I do, Harry," said Minna, quietly; "but I certainly am not conscious of any grave airs at present. On the contrary, I fear I am a little light-headed with this gay and exhilarating scene."

"But you always look so pale and calm, Minna," said Harry. "Now do look at little Laura's wild eyes and glowing cheeks. Her whole soul is in the dancing."

"I hope not," said Godfrey; "charming as the recreation of dancing is, I hope we are none of us so forgetful of our brief abode on earth, as to give up our whole heart and soul, even for one hour, to worldly thoughts and pleasures."

"Hear, hear," cried Laura, who just then came dancing up to them. "My learned and venerable brother, with

a happy selection of time and place, is preaching his first sermon in a ball-room.

‘The lamps shone on fair women and brave men,
A thousand hearts beat happily,
And all went merry as a marriage bell;
But hush! hark! a deep sound strikes like a rising knell!’”

“Capital,” said Harry, “I like your spirit, little one. Come, dance with me, and let us be friends.”

Laura was not much pleased with Harry’s familiar and patronising manner; but she liked to talk, and to be admired. So, as Harry was a tall, manly youth, she condescended to take his arm, and join the quadrille. Godfrey and Minna followed, both somewhat grieved at Laura’s levity. Minna loved her little friend dearly, with all her faults, and, seeing Godfrey’s vexation, she said,—

“I wish, dear Godfrey, your mamma would keep Laura with her at home; she could study with me. Good Miss Aylmer would only be too happy to lead the dear wild girl to think a little more seriously of serious things. She need not become Lady Grave-airs, as I have done.”

“How happy I should be if I could hope to see her quite like you, dear Minna!” fervently exclaimed Godfrey. “All the dazzling tinsel of her manner is oppressive to me; all her exaggerated language actually makes me tremble. Oh, Minna! how holy, how beautiful is truth!”

This was not common ball-room conversation; but Godfrey and Minna were not common young people.

They were well-instructed and thoughtful; and never, in the midst of the pleasures of youth, lost sight of their responsibility as Christians.

But time fled, as he will flee, however precious the moments may be. Even Laura felt weary of dancing, and condescended to enjoy the splendid supper, with all the relish that girls of thirteen usually have for a supper. When she entered the carriage with her brother, exhausted and sleepy, but with the ruling passion not quite extinguished, she languidly exclaimed, "Oh, Godfrey! what a dull, stupid Prince Lutin is your favourite Arthur Wilmot;—so awkward too, blushing when he is spoken to, and murmuring to the servant that offered him champagne, 'If you please, sir, no!' How unlike Harry Beverley, easy and graceful, lofty and heroic! Harry is my *beau ideal* of a *preux chevalier*, 'dreaded in battle and loved in hall.' What a distinction for you, Godfrey, to be ranked among his friends!"

Tired as he was, Godfrey could not help laughing heartily at the transformation of Harry Beverley, an idle, good-natured schoolboy, into a hero of romance.

His parents, Lord and Lady Beverley, mingled too much with the gay world, to have leisure for the education of their children. The girls had their governess; and Harry, in the interval between his emancipation from the nursery and the commencement of his school-life, spent his time much as he pleased—that is, with the usual taste of boys, in his father's stables. There, to say the least, a very unsafe foundation was laid for his education. By great good fortune he

was sent to an excellent school; still more fortunately Godfrey Temple became his friend; for though thoughtless and idle, Harry's generosity of character and good temper made him a universal favourite. Godfrey, impressed with the conviction that every age has its duties, endeavoured to eradicate the weeds that choked the good seed in Harry's heart. He assisted him in his lessons, walked with him, listened to his anecdotes of dogs and horses, and quietly tried to turn his mind to nobler aspirations. Wealth, indulgence, and early habits, weighed heavily against Godfrey's efforts; but they were not wholly ineffectual. Harry respected and loved his true friend, wished to imitate him, and resolved to begin to-morrow; but to-morrow is a terminus at which the procrastinator never arrives. Poor Harry's reformation was yet to begin.

Much as Godfrey loved the thoughtless lad, it was impossible for him to refrain from laughter at Harry's elevation to the heroic nature. He assured Laura that she had mistaken the man; that Arthur Wilmot was the true hero, and a poet into the bargain. She was angry that her opinion should be treated with derision, but too sleepy to express her resentment. It was not till the next morning at breakfast, that she recollected what she termed Godfrey's scornful and sarcastic depreciation of Harry's excellence. Godfrey succeeded in obtaining her pardon, and the ball became the topic of the morning.

"Oh, mamma!" said Laura, in great excitement; "the splendour and magnificence of the entertainment

are beyond all power of description or comprehension. Never can I forget the dazzling scene. It was a bower of enchantment;—Aladdin's palace without the roc's egg."

Mrs. Temple looked surprised and alarmed at Laura's flights of fancy. "I rejoice, my dear child," said she, "that God grants you health and spirits to enjoy amusement; but such immoderate expressions as you have used, are equally offensive to good taste and to truth."

Mr. Temple, a man of excellent understanding and simple manners, looked reprovingly at the little girl, and said, "What nonsense you are talking, child! The children's ball last night, would be like other children's balls,—plenty of music and dancing, and more good things to eat than were good for you; but to talk of the drawing-room at Seymour House as Aladdin's palace, is an absurdity. I wish my dear sister Anne had taught you to call things by their right names. Come, no tears; but give me a kiss, and go to your pianoforte. Sing me 'cherry ripe,' like a good girl, before I go to town."

Laura was not accustomed to have her extravagant fancies so rudely crushed. She felt deeply mortified, and sighed for her indulgent aunt's dangerous adulation. Accustomed, however, to be obedient to her papa, she played and sung for him till her good-humour returned. As Mr. Temple took a tender leave of her, he could not but bitterly lament that Mrs. Temple's constant indisposition had deprived his child of that priceless advantage, the care of a mother.

CHAPTER II.

Il vederti attristar m'è doppia morte;
E se pur pianger vuoi, deh! fa dimora
Tanto che il spirito se ne voli fuori,
Ch' esser già per uscir sento alle porte.

TEBALDEO.

Oh! that the sum of human happiness
Should be so trifling, and so frail withal.

KIRKE WHITE.

LAURA TEMPLE was never to enjoy the inestimable blessing of a mother's superintending care. Mrs. Temple was obliged once more to seek a warmer climate, and two years passed before Laura saw her again. Then her aunt and herself were summoned to Templeton Court, to meet the long-suffering mother, returned but to die.

Laura, unaccustomed to control her emotions, shrieked in terror as she approached the death-bed of her mother, and beheld the unmistakeable finger of death on her pallid cheek. It was necessary to remove her by force from the room.

"Anne Temple," said the dying mother, "it is not the will of God that I should be allowed to teach my child the knowledge of Him. On you devolves that solemn duty. As you hope we may all meet again, ab-

solved from earthly stain, in the pure realms of glory, pour light into her benighted soul. Teach her to lift her hands humbly to her Saviour. Teach her to walk on earth in meekness and truth. Oh, my sister! the sight of the unsubdued passions of my child presses heavily on my parting soul. Kneel down, Anne; give me your promise to teach her that God is truth."

The conscience-stricken sister bent over that bed of death, and vowed to search for the path of truth herself, and, by God's help, to lead her neglected charge with her. The exhausted mother sank gratefully into the repose of death, to revive in bliss.

Powerful and lasting was the impression made by this scene of dying faith on the mind of Miss Temple. She saw all the gaudy creations of her ill-regulated fancy crumble to dust, for they were not founded on the rock of truth. Weeping over her mis-spent hours, she resolved, at that solemn moment of penitence and affliction, to rouse her soul to new duties. She was soon called to trial. For weeks she watched over the sickbed of Laura, whose uncurbed grief had produced a fever of the brain. Youth and a good constitution, by God's help, bore her through the dangerous illness; and Miss Temple, after once more trembling in the presence of death, blessed the mercy that restored to her the opportunity of beginning her labour of love.

It was on a bright day in autumn, that Laura was first brought from her sickbed into the cheerful morning-room, and laid on a sofa, pale, feeble, and attenuated; but little changed in heart.

"Oh, dear aunt! I do not wish to recover," cried she; "I am the most wretched creature in the world. I cannot bear to live, now that I have lost my sweet mamma for ever."

"But, Laura, you must bear to live," said her aunt; "you may be happy again, I trust, even in this world; and do not say you have lost your blessed mamma for ever, but pray earnestly that you may be permitted to meet her again in heaven. We have both important duties to fulfil, too long neglected. We must not yield to the sin of immoderate sorrow. It is our duty to live, and hope, and labour cheerfully."

Laura could not understand the calm remonstrance of her aunt. She had never heard from her the voice of reproof; the change surprised and annoyed her. Unable yet to talk much, she turned away her face, and thoughts like these rapidly crossed her mind. "My aunt is growing old, and as dull and prosy as Godfrey. When I first recovered the power of speech, I asked him to read to me 'Paradise and the Peri,' and he chose to give me the 116th Psalm in its place—a sublime, a divine piece of poetry, I allow; nay, it brought tears into my eyes, but they were tears of dejection and mortification. How different the tears of ecstasy produced by Moore's delicious poetry! . . . This house is hateful to me. When shall I be able to leave it, and be myself again? I wonder how I shall look in my elegant crape. . . . But poor, dear mamma!" Here a few natural tears calmed the restless fancy of the unhappy girl, and she slept.

Laura rapidly recovered her health and strength ; but Miss Temple saw with regret, that though she left her sick-room increased in stature and beauty, her evil habits were unchanged. Fully engaged herself in wrestling with her own newly-awakened conscience, she longed for aid in the arduous task of rooting out the weeds which her own hand had planted in her niece's heart. She reckoned much on the assistance of Godfrey ; but he, after severe labours at college, crowned with high honours, was refreshing himself by a tour with his tutor during the long vacation ; nor did they expect a visit from him before Christmas.

As soon as her friend was allowed to see company, Minna Seymour was the first to visit her ; and great was Laura's delight to have any one willing to listen to her extravagant expressions of grief and discontent.

Minna readily wept with her ; for she felt what an affliction it must be to lose a mother. Tenderly embracing her friend, she endeavoured to comfort her, and assured Laura she would always love her like a sister.

"My own beloved Minna," cried Laura, "we will never more be separated. You must remain in this house of mourning, or I must come to you. Why should we ever be torn asunder?"

Minna smiled. "I do not think, dear Laura, that any one would tear us asunder ; but I fear that mamma will not consent that I should live with you here. It would interfere with my duties and my daily studies ; but I promise to visit you frequently."

"Oh, no ! stay, Minna, if you love me," said Laura.

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"We can study together. I read a great deal. I am plunged at present into the works of Goëthe, and am enthralled by his magic. I judge every nation by its literature. I admire the lofty and imaginative German, I adore the ardent and passionate Italian, and delight in the brilliancy and wit of the French."

"And the English?" asked Minna.

"Oh, the English!" she replied with an air of decision, "the English, with some splendid exceptions, are dull and prosy; they want imagination and fire."

"But what class of authors do you chiefly read?" demanded Minna.

"How can you ask, Minna!" said the spoiled girl; what do you imagine *I* should read? The poets only. Divine poetry! I have no taste for the common things of the world. I live in a dream-land of poetry and romance."

"But, my dear Laura," Minna ventured to say with humility, "I really think that the poetry of a nation is not a fair criterion of its literature. But you have read more than I, and perhaps I ought not to speak on a subject of which, I confess, I have a very superficial knowledge."

"Indeed you ought not, Minna," said Laura; "my Italian master declared that I understood the poets of Italy better than he did. He always called me the English Laura, and applied to me the words of the poet—

"Di qual sol nacque l'alma luce altera
Di que' begli occhi."

"Yes, we will read poetry all the day long, Minna. The

evenings we will devote to music and dancing. How enchanting! This shall be the fairy-court, and we will reign joint queens."

Minna was amused with Laura's fantastic plans, but assured her they were impracticable. They might be friends, true friends; but must continue to be young ladies of the lower world, not fairy queens, nor damsels of romance. Neither did she quite agree to Laura's division of time. She thought that the world claimed some duties from them; and Minna, blushing to act the teacher, but not shrinking from her duty, added, she thought that God had not bestowed on us the gift of understanding to be entirely devoted to poetry, music, and dancing.

Laura thought Minna very eccentric and prudish; considering her, however, very inferior to herself in abilities and accomplishments, she regarded her opinions with some contempt. They parted, nevertheless, with much real affection, and some degree of compassion for each other.

CHAPTER III.

—With airy self-conceit
In her own fond apprehension
A theme for all the world's attention.

COWPER.

SEVERAL weeks passed over, during which Miss Temple vainly attempted, by persuasion and example, to induce Laura to adopt a more useful course of reading and a more simple style of language. Lady Seymour, who frequently accompanied her daughter to Templeton Court, perceived that Miss Temple had acquired a greater simplicity of manner, and was anxious to effect a similar change in Laura. She turned the conversation on Laura's unfinished education, and inquired if Miss Temple proposed to engage a governess, or send her niece to a finishing school. The latter alternative Lady Seymour deprecated, except in very peculiar circumstances. She had always preferred home education; but Laura was no longer a child, nor was Miss Temple fitted for the task. In this case a school might be of service.

"Dear Lady Seymour," said Miss Temple, with tears in her eyes; "I am now but too well aware that I ought to have sought out a governess for my precious charge. I was unsuited for that high office. I am conscious
* * I have grievously mis-spent my time, and wasted

my powers. I have left undone the things I ought to have done, and have done the things I ought not to have done. I have neglected and spoiled the motherless child confided to my care. Can I ever be forgiven this great sin?"

Lady Seymour, a woman of excellent understanding, and of a humane and cheerful disposition, consoled the timid and disconsolate aunt; and promised to help her in her difficulties.

"In the first place," she added, "bring your charge, Miss Temple, to Seymour House, and make a long visit with us. Laura, amongst obedient children, will feel the necessity of submitting to be a little longer a child. She must become 'a little child,' Miss Temple, before the good seed can bear fruit in her heart."

Gratefully Miss Temple accepted the hospitality of Lady Seymour; and Laura, weary of her seclusion, was delighted with the opportunity of once more displaying her accomplishments and graces. Mr. Temple was one of the partners in an important bank in the county town, and was frequently called there on business. Giving his leisure to the sports of the field, he had little time to devote to the care of his daughter. Sensible of the advantages the visit would give to his child, he consented to it without hesitation.

Sir Henry and Lady Seymour sought their sole pleasure in the bosom of their family, and found it there. Sir Henry, by nature timid and reserved, had early shunned public life, and might have fallen into the useless apathy of the idle country gentleman; but his

fortunate union with a woman of strong understanding, great firmness of character, and gentle and winning temper, had exalted and strengthened his nature, and given a tone of vigour and usefulness to all his pursuits. They had an ample fortune, excellent health, and a fine family, of which our friend Minna was the eldest.

Minna Seymour, with a little of her father's constitutional indolence and shyness, had acquired from her mother's valuable instruction and example, the firmness to correct her own foibles, which rarely obtained any advantage over her. The mother looked with pleasure on her daughter's friendship with Laura. She trusted that Minna's good sense would enable her to avoid Laura's follies, and profit from her energy and activity of mind.

Of the younger children, Henry and Charles, boys of fourteen and fifteen years, were at Mount Green school. Caroline, a fine lively girl of twelve, and Emma, a mild little creature of ten, were, with their eldest sister, pupils of Miss Aylmer, a lady who was the friend and companion of Lady Seymour, and the able instructress of her daughters.

It was on a bright day in December, that Laura and her aunt arrived at this hospitable and happy abode. Miss Temple experienced a sensation of relief and of peace as she entered the house. She was no longer wholly responsible for the spoiled child. Laura saw her aunt installed in a handsome apartment, and was then conducted to her own. The pretty little room, with its French bed hung with spotless dimity, opened

into a light, pleasant dressing-room, containing a piano-forte, drawing materials, and a well-furnished bookcase. There was a cheerful fire in each room, and nothing was wanting necessary for convenience or comfort. Yet Laura felt some mortification when she discovered that her apartments were in the nursery-gallery.

"How strange, and how negligent!" she thought; "if Minna had been my visiter, I should have provided for her one of the best apartments. Aunt Temple, I allow, is properly noticed; but why am I, more than fifteen years old, to be treated like a child?"

However, Susan, her maid, informed her that Miss Seymour's room was next to her's, so she was comforted, and commenced the pleasing duties of the toilet.

She arrayed herself for the first time in one of her elegant mourning dresses, and could not but sigh as she discovered the impossibility of wearing her becoming pearl necklace with the emerald clasp; but as this involved a solecism in good taste, she shook off the thought. She contented herself with a rosary and cross of jet, which she conceived would give a certain conventual character to her costume, a little injured indeed by the inconsistency of her long chestnut ringlets. These, in the ardour of her new fancy, she would have gathered into bands, and so concealed; but time would not allow the change to be accomplished. She therefore entered the drawing-room, looking as much like a nun as it was possible for a young lady to do, in a low evening dress, with short sleeves, kid gloves, satin shoes, and flowing curls.

Laura had never been so much struck with the appearance of Sir Henry Seymour. She had not often seen him in full dress, and he certainly looked to advantage now. He was tall, of noble air and mild demeanour; and Laura began to consider to which of her heroes of romance he bore the greatest resemblance. The party was augmented by the arrival of Colonel and Mrs. Fermor. The Colonel was the uncle of Lady Seymour. A worthy old soldier, he was much beloved by the children, to whom he told many a long story of the wars. Exceedingly deaf, he frequently uttered his thoughts in a voice loud enough to be heard by every one but himself. His favourite topics were the exploits of Napoleon and Wellington. Nay, so convinced was he of the importance of this subject, that if he saw persons in earnest conversation, he at once assumed that they must be discussing the merits of the two great warriors. Mrs. Fermor was his interpreter, and certainly she held no sinecure office. She was a lively, bustling, garrulous old lady, great on the subject of "the queen," meaning Queen Charlotte, and professing great compassion for all who had not seen Charles Fox or "the beautiful Duchess of Devonshire."

Laura was not satisfied with her position in the company. She had been accustomed to be the object of much attention, and here she found herself unnoticed. Turning to Minna, who sat next to her, she said, "What a strange arrangement you have here, Minna! Pray, where are your sisters? I thought your mamma would not have suffered Miss Aylmer to leave them."

"When we are at dinner," said Minna, "they always spend an hour or two with dear old nurse. They read or talk to her, and she has great pleasure in listening to them. We shall see my sisters in the drawing-room."

To Laura, Miss Aylmer's presence at table was unexpected and disagreeable; but she reserved the discussion of this impropriety, till she was alone with her aunt. Wearied with silence, she again addressed her friend.

"I have discovered what hero your father most resembles. It is Godfrey of Boulogne.

'Augusto in volto, ed in sermon sonoro.'

Look, he is the hero himself haranguing his turbulent knights."

Minna could not say that the comparison was happy. She knew that her dear, good father had nothing of the hero about him. But, unaccustomed to argue in company, she smiled, and was silent.

"You two young ones," said Colonel Fermor, "must be either at Austerlitz or Waterloo. Come, tell me what hero you were speaking of,—Napoleon or Wellington?"

"We spoke of a nobler hero than either," said Laura; "of an immortal hero, Godfrey,

*'Il capitano
Che 'l gran sepolcro liberò di Cristo.'*

Napoleon, as I should judge from his portrait, was a very insignificant little personage. The Duke of Wellington was without doubt a great warrior; but now he looks like other old men, very uninteresting."

Laura's words were faithfully repeated by Mrs

Fermor in a loud voice, to her husband. Laura blushed to hear her own words, which on repetition appeared somewhat flat, and, as she could not help feeling, not a little conceited. She resolved to be cautious before she spoke to the deaf man again.

"My good child," said the Colonel to Laura, with a look of pity, "my good child, you don't know what you are talking about. You seem to have learnt your Italian lessons well. 'Tis a pity that you have not learned something of the histories of the nations of Europe during the last important century. Napoleon was a great man. I allow it, though I fought many a battle against him. And our immortal Wellington will be venerated in future ages, when your glorious crusaders, and Tasso himself, shall be forgotten. Beg the Duke's pardon, my dear girl, and I will drink a glass of wine with you."

Laura was somewhat humbled and mortified by this reproof, but even notice like this she preferred to silence and obscurity. So in a few well-turned sentences she signified her allegiance to the British hero, and then, with proper dignity, drank wine with the gallant Colonel, who muttered, "Clever girl, but wants discipline."

"Take no notice of the Colonel, my dear," said Mrs. Fermor, "he has the bad habit of talking to himself. But pray tell me, was your mother a Miss Vavasour," looking very attentively at Laura, who burst into tears. Minna, after gently soothing her, whispered to Mrs. Fermor, that Laura was in mourning for her mo-

ther, and had been affected by the sudden allusion to her.

"I am sorry that I have revived your sorrow, my dear," said Mrs. Fermor; "but time will allay the bitterness of your grief, and you will learn to take pleasure in the remembrance of the parent you have lost. I asked the question, because I remembered that many years ago a beautiful Miss Vavasour, whom you greatly resemble, was presented at court."

"My dear mother's name was Vavasour," said Laura, comforted by the flattering allusion of Mrs. Fermor.

"I recollect well," said the old lady, "the good queen's admiration of her rich golden curls. It was after the use of hair-powder was given up. I continue, however, to wear it at court. I think there is a propriety in the custom."

Laura did not see the propriety of the custom; but Mrs. Fermor's allusion to her mother checked the impertinent reply she might have been tempted to give. She contented herself with a quiet inquiry, if Queen Charlotte was really so ugly as the portraits represented her.

"She was not ugly, child," said Mrs. Fermor, rather angrily; "she was never reckoned very handsome; but arrayed in her rich brocades, flowing over the ample hoop, with her splendid diamonds and high feathers, she looked like a queen. Not one of the household but trembled at her nod."

"How glad I am," said Minna, "that I have not to be presented to an awful sovereign like Queen Charlotte;

but to one who looks like a gentle lady, and wins love, instead of exciting fear."

"If it were my fate to be a queen," said Laura, "I have no taste for being a quiet, well-beloved queen. I prefer admiration—worship. I would, like Marcia, tower above my sex. I would, like Cleopatra, 'the serpent of old Nile,' see monarchs humbled at my feet."

Miss Aylmer smiled, and shook her head.

"Why should I not be a heroine, Miss Aylmer?" inquired Laura.

"Be a heroine, Miss Temple," said Miss Aylmer; "but a passive heroine. Remember,

'Woman, born to dignify retreat,
Unknown to flourish, and unseen be great;
To give domestic life its sweetest charm,
With softness polish, and with virtue warm;
Fearful of fame, unwilling to be known,
Should seek but Heaven's applauses and her own.'

"How can you make the standard of woman's glory so contemptible, Miss Aylmer," said Laura, "and attempt to confirm your decision by those wretched, dull lines? They must be the production of that bore *par excellence*, that tiresome old schoolmistress, Hannah More. Yes, I remember them. Do you recollect, dear aunt, that stupid evening we spent at Allingham Rectory, where those model children, the Eltons, enacted that sublime composition, 'The Search after Happiness,' to the delight of the rector and his lady, and the discomfort and vexation of their guests? How we laughed at the exhibition as we returned home, and at the rector's impertinent speech to me—'Good-night, little Pastorella!'"

"I do remember it," said Miss Temple, with a blush of shame, "and, I fear, we were very culpable in ridiculing the kind attempt made to entertain us."

"You will probably see the objectionable drama performed here next week," said Lady Seymour; "and, my dear Laura, if Mrs. More did not write poetry for immortality, she endeavoured to win souls to immortality, a more glorious aim. If my 'little Pastorella' will condescend to take the part, we shall be charmed to have her assistance."

Laura by no means liked to have her opinions thus slighted, and would gladly have replied in her loftiest style; but there was something in the calm firmness of Lady Seymour that subdued her. This unwonted humiliation annoyed her; and still greater was her annoyance that Miss Aylmer, only a governess, should have presumed to reprove her. She rejoiced when all retired to the drawing-room. There, at all events, though her eloquence might not be appreciated, her singing and playing would, she conceived, be unrivalled.

She sat down to the pianoforte, and commenced one of Beethoven's brilliant compositions, which she performed in a style that attracted the admiration of all. Caroline and Emma Seymour gazed at her with wonder. When she had finished her *chef d'œuvre*, turning to Caroline, she said, "Well, little one, you have been very attentive; do you admire this glorious composition?"

"I like the music very much," replied Caroline.

"Did you ever hear it better played?" asked Laura.

"Yes, Miss Aylmer plays it better," answered the

child. She does not make so much noise, and I can hear and understand all the music, when she plays."

Laura concealed her vexation by a forced laugh. Then taking the harp, she displayed the powers of her rich and melodious voice in Schubert's song, "The Erl King," which she sung with dramatic effect. When she reached the catastrophe of the fearful tale, little Emma turned pale and burst into tears.

Caroline tenderly soothed her young sister. "Be composed, dear Emma; it is a terrible story; but we should not allow anything that is false to make us grieve. The song is very wicked; for God does not permit Erl Kings to torment little children. Pray, Miss Temple, do not sing the song again. I am sure that Minna would not sing it."

"Indeed, Carry," said Minna, "I could not sing 'The Erl King,' nor move the listeners to tears, as Laura can. She has the rare gift of a fine voice, which I have not."

"But I like you singing better than Miss Temple's," said Caroline. "I feel so happy when you sing 'The Better Land;' I think of heaven and of angels. Your singing is perhaps not very clever; but it sounds like the song of the lark in a summer morning,—as if you were singing to God, and not to the company in the drawing-room."

Laura was somewhat offended by the criticism of the observing child, and wished heartily that the children and their governess were replaced by a more discerning audience. Miss Aylmer perceived that these mortifications were less salutary than might be wished. She

invited Laura to join her in playing some difficult duets. The good governess, pleased with the brilliancy and taste of the girl's execution, began to hope that the talent and diligence which had given this perfection, might, by judicious efforts, be turned to the improvement of her moral character.

The evening in Laura's opinion was excessively stupid. Nobody admired her flights of fancy. Nay, Colonel Fermor, who, in spite of his deafness, could hear and enjoy music, had asked her for such strange, vulgar old songs as "The Wounded Hussar," and "The Death of Nelson." Could she devote her extraordinary powers to the singing of such trash? But Minna, disregarding the indignity, sought out the songs from her mama's large collection, and sung them to the great content of the veteran.

The next morning, when Laura joined the breakfast-table at ten o'clock, she found that Minna and her sisters had been already two hours in the school-room. She was curious to know what they could employ themselves with at that untimely hour. Miss Aylmer begged she would satisfy her curiosity by joining them next morning. Though a school-room was not the theatre which Laura would have chosen for the display of her graces, yet her thirst for novelty induced her to consent.

It then became a question how to employ the morning. Colonel and Mrs. Fermor intended to call on one of the old soldier's friends and comrades of the Peninsular war. Lady Seymour was going to visit the sick of

the parish ; and Miss Temple volunteered to accompany her. Laura shrunk from both of these unpromising alternatives. Minna, with her sisters and Miss Aylmer, were to visit the village schools ; and, as the least evil, Laura consented to join the party.

CHAPTER IV.

Ah, good old Mantuan!—SHAKSPEARE.

Vous n'avez qu'à choisir, il est également fort sur toutes les matières, depuis la logique la plus fine et la plus serrée, jusqu'à l'orthographe.

TEMPLETON SCHOOL was one of those endowed free grammar schools, which have, from their remote situation and neglected funds, fallen into decay. The present master, Mr. Dilworth, was a man of some little classical knowledge, and of immense vanity. He had held the school many years, with an indifferent stipend and a few rough scholars, the sons of the farmers and mechanics of the neighbourhood; who were ambitious of giving their children a learned education at no cost. Mr. Dilworth was not the man Lady Seymour would have selected for a village schoolmaster; but she had not the power of removing him, even if she had had the inclination. A young man, paid by her, and dignified by Mr. Dilworth with the title of "English master," taught the younger pupils the requisites of an English education. The school-room was a large Elizabethan building, with diamond-paned casements, tall crooked chimneys,

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and a curious old porch, with a time-worn inscription on its front, declaring, in the language of learning, that the edifice was devoted to the study of the literature of Greece and Rome. Underneath this porch, the old schoolmaster was wont to sit on a summer evening, perusing some well-worn tome, gazing on the boys at play in the spacious playground, and fancying himself at least a Plato in the groves of Academus.

"We have brought a young lady to see the school, Mr. Dilworth," said Miss Aylmer.

"She is welcome to this seat of learning, my good madam," said the old man. "Would the young lady wish to see our mathematical, or our classical forces reviewed? They are both well drilled, and ready at a moment's warning."

Laura, by an expressive look, besought the aid of Miss Aylmer. "I fear, Mr. Dilworth," said the governess, "we must acknowledge our ignorance of mathematics."

"I judged so, ladies," said the schoolmaster, with a chuckle. "Alas! there is a grievous falling off in that noblest of the sciences. But we shall revive it here, madam; and, behold our materials! Newton himself would have shrunk before that class. Talk of your university men! If my first class could not puzzle them, I have carried off all the mathematical honours of the lady's diary for forty years unjustly! But we'll bring up our classics for you, ladies;—our Grecians. Nay, I fear they will be too many for you,—they are wonderfully up in Euripides; but no matter. Sir Henry

knows something about them,—he can give you some notion of what is going on here. Well, as you are not far advanced in your classics, ladies, as I suspect, suppose I call up my Cæsars.”

And, responsive to his call, half a dozen dirty lads started up, with dog-eared books in hand, and each in turn gabbling over a sentence of Latin, rendered it into very questionable English, to the great contentment of the master, and the amusement of Miss Aylmer; but perceiving that Laura was annoyed, she stopped them, and requested to hear the English class.

Mr. Dilworth bowed, and called “Mr. Hall.” A tall, awkward, red-haired youth of eighteen stepped out. “Here, ladies,” said the head-master, “I confess my weakness. In my ardent love for learning, I can descend to ‘*Propria quæ maribus* ;’ but no lower. The rudiments of the vernacular are not fitted for my mental powers. That important department,” he added, in a slightly sarcastic tone, “I leave in the hands of Mr. Hall, a man who might now have been among my Grecians; but Nature denied him the nobler aspirations, and he chose his vocation. I commit you to him, ladies.” The old man bowed with an air of ineffable self-complacency.

The despised Mr. Hall commanded his pupils to repeat the multiplication table, which they certainly accomplished with accuracy, but with voices pitched to such a key, that Laura put her hands to her ears, to shut out the shrill sound. Miss Aylmer asked them a few questions in Sacred History, which they answered

promptly and correctly, but in the same loud, broad, provincial tone, which had before offended Laura's delicate ear. One boy, who displayed some readiness in English History, Mr. Dilworth had evidently his eye on, and had marked out for his own especial forms. This boy, Caroline told Laura, was nurse's grandson, whom the venerable dame was wont to call her "prodigal," for nurse was fond of long words, and somewhat wayward in her application of them. The ladies, then, with many commendations, took leave of the consequential schoolmaster and his humble ally—a great relief to Laura, to whom the noise and the noisome smell of the crowded room were highly offensive. They proceeded to the dame-school, which they found much more quiet, clean, and orderly.

Mrs. Butler, the mistress, a little, bustling, old woman, of remarkable volubility, was delighted to see them, and to have a fresh set of auditors. "Chairs, Martha Bates!" she called out. "Do sit, ladies. Ah, Miss Minna! no flowers in my garden now; but look at this rose-bud, Miss; I keep it carefully out of the frost, and I hope to have a rose for Mr. Melville on Christmas-day. Betsy Williams, where did you learn to bite off your thread? How many times must I tell you, it's not genteel to bite off your thread? A great deal of trouble there is, Miss, in getting them to mind what I say. But there are some neat hands among them; and I think I may say that Master Henry's new shirts will be worth looking at. It's not every girl can be trusted with a shirt—specially, Miss Minna, specially the button-holes.

Susan Hopkins, now what are you about? Bring me up that seam. I saw you taking the pins out—you are at your puckering again!"

Unlucky Susan produced her work. "Look there, ladies," continued the irritated dame; "an inch over at the end! Did I pin it that way, girl? Pick it every stitch out, and see that you neither tear it nor dirty it. There's no end to their puckering, Miss. They talk so much, they cannot mind their work, and, as I often tell them, what is a great talker worth in this world!"

Minna suggested that seams were difficult. "Mama used to baste the edges together for us, when we were learning to sew," added Caroline.

"Very well for you, Miss Caroline," said the school-mistress; "but poor scholars must learn to sew their work without basting.—Susan Hopkins, are you not ashamed that the ladies have seen your puckering.—Oh, ladies! if you had seen the girls in my day at their sewing, their knitting, and their spinning. None of your recreation hours, then!—Work, work, from six in the morning till bed-time; and, though I say it myself that should not say it, there wasn't a girl of my years that could turn out such work as mine. What did my lady, your blessed grandmama, say, when I finished Master Henry's new set of shirts to take to school,—that's your papa, Miss,—Master Henry that was then?—'Nelly Butler,' said my lady, 'Nelly Butler, you know how to make a shirt.' I often tell the scholars of it. 'Nelly Butler, said she, 'you know how to make a shirt.'"

Miss Aylmer, anxious to put an end to the oft-told

tale of Master Henry's shirts, went round to examine the work, and encourage the girls by a little praise. Then, in compassion to Laura's wearied looks, she bid the old woman good-morning.

"My very dear friend," said Laura, as they left the school, "how rejoiced I am to be relieved from these oppressive scenes. How can you debase your exalted nature by mingling with these savage hordes? I must live long in a world of beings like myself, before I can forget these creatures of a lower order. Pray, Miss Aylmer, spare me the severe remonstrance of your eyes. I have wealth, and the poor may have a full share of it; but I cannot sully the brightness of my life by contact with their dirt and misery."

"My dear child," said Miss Aylmer, "I tremble for you. You are speaking presumptuously on a subject of which you are lamentably ignorant, but which it is necessary you should understand. You are bound to fulfil your duties in the world; and one important duty is, to subdue this fastidiousness, and give to your less fortunate fellow-creatures, not only a portion of your wealth, but your sympathy and kind offices."

"But why am I called upon to make such painful sacrifices?" asked Laura petulantly.

"Because God wills it so," said Miss Aylmer firmly. A moment's thought will convince you, my dear Miss Temple, that the spirit of Christianity calls on us to 'do unto others as we would have them do to us.' If you require a confirmation of this principle from the poets you admire so much, listen to Wordsworth.

Man is dear to man: the poorest poor
Long for some moments in a weary life,
When they can know and feel that they have been
Themselves the fathers and the dealers out
Of some small blessings; have been kind to such
As needed kindness.'

In a short time you will, with the poor despised children we saw to-day, share one common grave. Once more you will meet, but then all will be equal, at the great tribunal of the last day."

Laura walked on silently and moodily. She felt dissatisfied with herself and with her companions, and longed for the sympathy of her indulgent aunt, "though even she seems to have imbibed some of the rigid notions of this family," thought the spoiled girl.

"Well, my dear Laura," said Lady Seymour, when she entered the drawing-room, "how did you like your visit to the schools?"

"I must confess that I have been much disappointed," replied Laura. "I had some curiosity to see Minna's show-places; but the noise, the confusion, and the coarseness of the exhibition, were quite overwhelming. That unparalleled bore, the schoolmaster, poured forth such torrents of conceit and nonsense on our wearied ears, positively for hours, that I was on the point of fainting under the infliction. Then that loquacious old vixen who tyrannized over the girls, was, if possible, more tedious. She is, besides, desperately cruel. She looked as if she could have murdered that little dirty wretch that gnawed her thread."

"Oh, no, Laura!" cried Caroline indignantly; "good

Mrs. Butler is not cruel: she loves all the girls.—And Betsy is not a dirty wretch,—poor Betsy, mama!—And why do you call Mr. Dilworth such odd names, Laura? He was a little pompous, mama, because we had a stranger with us, but he certainly did not speak for even half an hour.”

“Pray, child,” said Laura, in a disdainful tone, “do not accuse me of the baseness and cowardice of falsehood.”

“You would not tell base, cowardly lies, Laura,” answered Caroline, “as the poor ignorant children do, when they are afraid of punishment. You never speak less than the truth; but very often more than the truth. I think you do so, because you like your stories to be admired.”

However angry Laura was at Caroline’s frankness, she made no reply; but, turning to Lady Seymour, she said, “I suppose you will allow, Lady Seymour, that it is not imperative to give always scrupulously the bare description of a fact. If it were, how fearfully stupid would all conversation become. Adieu to all the poetry of social intercourse!”

“You are mistaken in your notion of poetry, Miss Temple,” said Miss Aylmer; “truth and simplicity are ever more charming than the glare of false ornament. The best poetry is the most simple in style, for its very essence is truth. You must have observed the sublime simplicity of Milton. How beautiful the unadorned narrative of the creation! And even when the fallen pair are driven from paradise, the poet puts into their

mouths no redundant exclamations;—the mournful farewell of the repentant Eve to the flowers of Eden is most pathetic in its simplicity.

‘Oh, flowers,
That never will in other climates grow,
My early visitation, and my last
At even, which I bred up with tender hand
From the first opening bud, and gave ye names.
Who now shall rear you to the sun, or rank
Your tribes, and water from the ambrosial fount.’

And your favourite, Shakspeare, who says, ‘Truth is truth, to the end of reckoning,’ in his most passionate scenes never exaggerates the expressions of nature. ‘Why should calamity be full of words?’ he observes. The apology of Henry VIII. to Wolsey, commencing with ‘My good Lord Cardinal,’ and the sketch of the departed statesman which Griffiths gives to Catherine, are models of a plain, forcible style; and in such a style, my dear Laura, you will find that all true poets write, I must allow that we have some modern pretenders to the name, some ‘new tuners of accents,’ whose inflated style, and words of mighty sound and little weight, render their ‘poetry’ almost unintelligible to me.”

“That chattering girl looks very cross,” muttered the Colonel in a voice audible to every body but himself; “I suppose the clever governess is giving her a hard drill.” Mrs. Fermor put her finger on her lips, and shook her head at her husband. He took the hint, and was silent for a time; but Laura had heard his remark, and was mortified when she found, that even the deaf old man had detected the vexation produced by

Caroline's accusation, and Miss Aylmer's reproof. A sort of respect for Miss Aylmer's superiority, and her own natural generosity of character, induced her, however, to say to Caroline, with a kiss, "You are a good little creature, Caroline; and Miss Aylmer lectures cleverly, but I cannot be condemned to prose all my life."

The next morning Laura actually entered the school-room soon after eight o'clock, and found Miss Aylmer and her pupils at their studies. Miss Aylmer welcomed her with much cordiality, and invited her to join them in their reading. The subject that morning was history.

"You must excuse me, Miss Aylmer," said she; "for of all subjects I know the least of history, and dislike it the most. I have always shuddered at the sight of the dry, solid pages of some grave history, with its appalling dates in the margin. My aunt always permitted me to read only what gave me pleasure. And you must allow, Miss Aylmer, that history in general, and the lives of all great, good, worthy people in particular, are, without exception, dull and uninteresting,"

"I allow no such thing," replied Miss Aylmer; "we will put aside the great fact of the usefulness of the history of nations, and of the biography of the wise, the great, and the good, and regard them only as supplying us with pleasant reading. Where can you find a fiction so absorbing, as the tale of the widely spread conquests of Alexander, or of the wars which Cæsar so skilfully waged in Gaul, in Spain, and in the East? What more

interesting than to trace the slow progress of civilization and religion among savage tribes, making the desert smile and blossom as the rose? What romance can shew us any thing more sublime than the serene magnanimity of Kosciusko, the hero of Poland, struggling with slender means against mighty hosts, to free his indignant country from foreign servitude? What more pathetic than the words of that heroic patriot, when overpowered by numbers, and wounded almost to death, he uttered the memorable and prophetic words '*Finis Poloniæ*?'

'Oh, bloodiest picture in the book of time!
Sarmatia fell, unwept, without a crime.'

Or what fiction paints an act of heroism so glorious, as that of the knightly defenders of Rhodes against the Turk; when, even to the very last man, they obeyed the stern command of their Grand Master, and stood resolutely waiting inevitable death?"

"Oh! I have read all that," said Laura, "in Miss Porter's delightful '*Knight of St. John*;' but the charm of that portion of history, in my opinion, was concentrated in the fictitious characters of Cesario and Giovanni. After all, I think that I should rather like to read history with you, Miss Aylmer, provided you would allow me to omit the politics and moral deductions. But lives of saintly archbishops, learned lord chancellors, and valiant generals, I eschew. I have no sympathy with such people."

"There is one biography which you read, and must love, Laura," said Minna; "I mean the life of St. Paul."

"What life of St. Paul do you mean?" asked Laura.

"Minna speaks," said Miss Aylmer, "of the life of the gifted apostle, written by his friend and fellow-labourer, the evangelist Luke, and contained in the Acts of the Apostles. How impressive is the narrative of his conversion, his zeal, his eloquence, his humility, his firmness in persecution and peril! So faithfully are his voyage and shipwreck on the coast of Malta described, that even an uneducated sailor of our day recognizes the winds and storms peculiar to the Mediterranean. This is beyond romance, Laura; and it is, moreover, true and profitable knowledge."

It was in this happy school-room, reading and conversing with Miss Aylmer and her fortunate pupils, that Laura discovered that she might have had a more judicious teacher than her kind aunt. In her continual intercourse with Lady Seymour, in sharing with her the labours of visiting the poor and needy, and of teaching the ignorant, Laura's aunt first learnt the nature of her duties to society; and, while she painfully regretted the past, she acquired fortitude and resolution for the future. But much still remained to do: it was long before Laura relinquished her love of romance, her self-conceit, and vanity. It was long before her habits and manners were assimilated to those of her friends.

CHAPTER V.

The autumn winds rushing,
Waft the winds that are serest;
But our flower was in flushing,
When blighting was nearest.

SCOTT.

CHRISTMAS was at hand, the boys were returning from school, and the house was to be filled with cheerful society, when one morning Lady Seymour announced to her guests that the arrival of an unexpected visiter was at hand. Minna had received a letter from her cousin, Harry Beverley, announcing his approach in characteristic fashion. At Laura's request the letter was read.

"DEAR MINNA—The governor has invited me to your Christmas party. Of course I shall come, for yours is the best Christmas house I know. So, Minna, my cousin, look out a few pretty girls for the ball, and give us less nursery furniture than you had last year. On that occasion I learned by sad experience, that your impertinent butler treated us with steward's-room champagne. Just tell your papa to come out handsomely, and let us have his Moët. Godfrey Temple is grinding

desperately ; he must come out a wrangler. He works me harder than my tutor ; but a double coach power cannot drag me up.

“ Give my love to that little fast girl, Laura Temple, and tell her I shall dance with her.

“ Unfailingly yours,

“ DEAR MINNA,

“ H. B.

“ Would your mama ask that magnificent woman, Lady Granby, to dine ? I shouldn't mind falling in love with her.”

Lady Seymour smiled indulgently at Harry's nonsense ; and Laura, though somewhat piqued, laughed at his impertinent reminiscence of her.

“ I will try to be *slower* this Christmas, Minna,” said she, when the two girls were alone. “ I admire Harry so much, and wish so earnestly to please him, that I do believe I am in love with him. It gives me great pain that he should speak so contemptuously of me.”

Minna laughed heartily at the notion of Laura's being in love. She was not so well read in romances as her friend, and the possibility of such an event occurring to herself, for some years at least, never entered her head.

“ It is quite true, Minna,” said Laura, “ however you may laugh. I have been assured of it ever since that memorable ball. When I have read how

‘ Il fanciullo Rinaldo
Dolcemente feroce alza,.....
La regal fronte,’

it was always Harry Beverley that I had before my eyes."

Minna's mirth was changed to wonder at Laura's seriousness in the matter; but, utterly unable to give either sympathy or advice, she quietly avoided further conversation on the subject.

The next day two school-boy Seymours arrived, to the great joy of the nursery, and to the confusion of the house.

The following day brought Harry Beverley, Arthur Wilmot, and, to Laura's great joy, Godfrey Temple, whom Lady Seymour had kindly invited. Godfrey was pleased to see the change in his sister's health. He fancied, too, that her manner was quieter than before, and he took the first opportunity of thanking Minna for the improvement he perceived. Minna disclaimed any merit in the change, but spoke warmly of Laura's high mental cultivation and generous disposition, which encouraged Miss Aylmer to hope that her defects of character might be overcome.

"After all, Minna," said Laura, the morning after the arrival; "after all your doubts, Harry Beverley does look like a hero. He is so tall and handsome, so fearless and frank. What a contrast between him and that plain, quiet, little Arthur Wilmot! Godfrey says that Arthur is a poet; but, Minna, does he look like a poet? I am a believer in physiognomy, and I decide that Harry Beverley's noble countenance gives higher promise of genius than Arthur Wilmot's dull and heavy brow."

"But you are deceived, indeed, Laura," said her friend; "I have learned from Godfrey that Harry possesses little genius. He is, moreover, so idle, that all the labours of his tutor, and the remonstrances and help of Godfrey, will probably not get him respectably through. Now, Arthur is a finished scholar, and the first in his college,—a distinction much more important to him than the reputation of a poet; for he is the son of a widowed mother of small fortune, and his hopes of rendering her old age comfortable rest on his success at the university. And then his excellent character and amiable manners have gained him the love and esteem of all his friends. His shyness arises from the secluded life which he led with his mother, after the death of his father, who was rector of Templeton, and a man much beloved by papa and mama. It is Arthur's wish to enter the church, for which he seems peculiarly fitted."

"He does, indeed," replied Laura, "and for nothing else in the world. Well, I certainly should abhor marrying a country clergyman, and spending my life in teaching dirty children, and reading to sick old women—not a change in the monotonous routine. Now, do not look so shocked, Minna. You have won me from my folly and flippancy; but I cannot avoid a relapse now and then."

With all Laura's faults, there was a frankness and cheerfulness about her, that always made her popular. She was the leader in all their sports and amusements; for she loved to rule. Harry Beverley and she were soon very good friends, though her exalted notions of

his character were imperceptibly lowered. They danced and sung together, laughed together at Colonel Fermor's oddities, planned all the charades, and acted the best parts themselves. Harry would even condescend to admire for a while some of Laura's excursions into the regions of fancy, but in the end generally brought her down from her pride of place by some well-directed stroke of ridicule.

One winter morning, after a severe night-frost, a skating party was proposed. Harry Beverley and the two young Seymours were anxious for the sport. Godfrey, who always devoted some time after breakfast to study, declined accompanying them. Minna and her sisters set off, attended by Arthur ; and Laura eager to display her dexterity and grace in skating, was not the least anxious of the party. On reaching the large pond which lay near the house, they were warned by a game-keeper that the ice on it was too thin to bear the weight of a skater ; but he directed them to a smaller piece of water on the verge of the park, where the villagers were allowed to amuse themselves.

To this spot they proceeded very merrily, enjoying the keen frosty air, and their plunge through the snow. Here they found a crowd of school-boys sliding at the edge of the pond. Arthur attempted to dissuade his friends from venturing on the ice, till they had ascertained its strength in the middle of the pond ; but the party laughed at his caution, and began to prepare for the exercise. Laura, who was first ready, dashed lightly forward on the frail ice, crying, " Come on, Harry," and

D.

directed her course across the pond. Harry had not yet fitted on his skates ; but the whole flock of school-boys, encouraged by seeing a lady pass the dangerous ice, rushed on together to establish a slide across the pond. In a moment the ice gave way in the middle with a fearful crash. Laura had just glided over the spot, but three of the boys sunk beneath the ice. The rest in great dismay scrambled ashore. Laura uttered a succession of piercing shrieks, and would have rushed again upon the ice, if Minna, who had fortunately walked round to that side of the pond, had not restrained her by force. The boys ran to the village for help. Harry Beverley, as rash as Laura, would have skated towards the opening, willing to do his best to save the unfortunate lads, but the water was already rising above the ice, and his skates were useless. "Let no one follow me," cried Arthur, seizing a hooked stick from a boy, and stepping gently over the ice to the broken edge of the hole through which the boys had sunk. At that moment one rose struggling to the surface. The intrepid youth caught him by the hair, and dragged him to the shore. Consigning him to the care of Minna, he returned and succeeded in seizing and in saving another of the lads. The water had now risen above the ice as high as his knees, but the generous youth ventured once more to approach the fracture, and now perceived through the clear water the body of the last victim lying at the bottom of the pond, at least six feet below the surface. Some labourers, whom the alarm had reached, had run to the spot with long drag-poles. With one of these,

pushed to him over the ice, Arthur after several attempts, caught the poor fellow's dress, and succeeded in raising the body. But now even Minna uttered a cry of terror, for she saw Arthur himself sink up to the waist. Fortunately, the ice did not break up, but sank in one mass. By the help of a rope, thrown to him by the villagers, the body of the child was brought to land. Arthur followed with exhausted strength and dripping clothes, but too much interested about the boys he had saved, to think of himself.

Minna, with her usual presence of mind, had ordered the still inanimate bodies to be carried to the Rectory, which was the nearest house, confident that Mr. Melville would spare no effort to recal the spark of life. She followed slowly with Arthur, now trembling with cold and exhaustion, and Laura, uttering idle lamentations and self-reproaches, conscious that her rashness had tempted the unfortunate boys to venture on the dangerous ice. On reaching the rectory they found the whole population of the village gathered together on the lawn. Those only who have lived among the poor, and know their ready sympathy with each other's sorrows, can picture to themselves the scene of mourning;—mothers whose children had escaped, weeping with the bereaved, and the strong man comforting his prostrate brother.

Laura covered her face and sobbed aloud, as she passed through the crowd. She listened for their whispered reproaches, but she heard only the blessings poured on the head of the modest and retiring Arthur. For a

moment she felt some disappointment when she found her fault overlooked; and not less of pique, and much wonder, at the praises showered on the popular idol. Harry Beverley met them at the door. He was rushing out to announce to the anxious crowd that two of the boys, by prompt and judicious efforts, had been restored to life. The child last brought out of the water was quite dead. When Laura heard the cries of despair uttered by the distracted father, and saw the afflicted mother lying insensible in the arms of her neighbours, her violent expressions of remorse were renewed; but in the scene of real sorrow before them, no one noticed her, and she hastily entered a room alone. Here she sunk down and wept, till a clearer light dawned on her mind, and she saw how selfish and unprofitable were her lamentations in that hour of bitter anguish. She rose and went to the room where the body of the drowned child was lying. Here she found Mrs. Melville and Minna employed in soothing the grief of the weeping mother, and Mr. Melville endeavouring by his pious counsels to abate the despair of the father.

The boy was their youngest born, the child of their old age, the pride and comfort of their life. What wonder that Joseph and Nanny Dent were inconsolable? Laura rushed up to Joseph, as soon as she recognized him, exclaiming, "It is I that am to blame!—but for my folly and rashness your boy would not have ventured upon the ice. Can you ever forgive me? I have robbed you of happiness, and I shall never regain my own."

"It is not in the power of man, Miss Temple," said Mr. Melville, "to rob the christian of all his happiness. The presence of God, even on earth, and the hope of meeting the departed in blessedness, are the mourner's consolations. These the world can neither give nor take away."

Laura shrunk silently from the rebuke, but in her heart she acknowledged its truth. She went up to Nanny and took her hand. Instead of making professions, she wept with her; and secretly resolved to do her best to console and help the afflicted parents. For the present it was judged best for them to remain with the benevolent rector and his lady.

Arthur had been, by the doctor's orders, put to bed. The rest of the party returned sorrowfully home, Harry Beverley exclaiming, and no one but he would have made the remark,—“So ends our Christmas jollity!”

And it was so. The sight of death and misery, though it was in a humble cottage, had chilled their cheerful anticipations. Lady Seymour dismissed her young guests, promising that if no untoward event occurred they should meet in the summer, when the ancestral woods and sunny glades of the widely spread domains of the romantic district might be the scene of many a pleasant excursion.

Laura and her aunt remained a few weeks longer at Seymour House, and then returned home, with a new zeal aroused in their hearts, prompting them to unwonted and nobler exertions. Laura agreed to join Minna in her weekly visits to the school-rooms; and

she spent many an hour with Nanny Dent, talking to her, working with her, and weeping with her, till the poor woman learnt to love the warm-hearted girl, who had unwittingly caused all her affliction. Many a little comfort did the bountiful hand of Laura bestow on her, and on the needy and sick around her.

"I never knew before," she observed to Minna, "how I ought to assist the poor. My aunt always ordered the housekeeper to make soup twice a week, and to distribute it, together with milk and vegetables, to all who needed aid. But we never inquired after the applicants, nor saw them. We left all to the discretion of Mrs. Murray, who is, I believe, a kind creature, and would try to be just;—but how many might be neglected! At Christmas we ordered warm clothing of the drapers, but we did not care to inquire how it was bestowed. We were each absorbed in our particular enjoyments, and had no time for the practical duties of charity. We gave money, Minna; but that was easy for us, who had plenty to give. I am now aware of our fault, and Aunt Temple feels bitter remorse for her neglect. Her life is now spent in repairing her error. I can never be as good as she is, Minna; her days are spent in active benevolence. She is truly a 'Sister of Charity.'"

CHAPTER VI.

Ye of the rose cheek and the bright eye,
And the bounding footstep, . . .
With the lyre, and the wreath, and the joyous lay,
Come forth to the sunshine.

HEMANS.

ANOTHER year and a half passed rapidly. Godfrey's success was complete; he took a high wrangler's degree, and had a promise of the first vacant fellowship in his college. How pleasant was his welcome at Templeton Court, when he came down for his summer visit, with all his honours fresh upon him; and how he rejoiced to detect, in all the warmths of Laura's welcome, so little of her former exaggeration of manner and style. He was not less pleased to find that Aunt Temple had given up her establishment, and come to reside permanently at Templeton Court,—the good genius of the house and neighbourhood, loving all and beloved by all.

Mr. Temple was justly proud of his son, and expressed the heartiness of his joy by again and again shaking hands with him. A few days after Godfrey's arrival, when the family were assembled in the drawing-room, Mr. Temple thus began to communicate to him the state of his affairs.

“ You are old enough to understand these matters,

my son, and have now leisure to make yourself master of them."

Mr. Temple had from his birth had a share in a long established county-bank. The rest of the partners were dead, the last of them, a Mr. Radnor, having been lately carried off by a sudden illness. For the more convenient division of his property among a large family, the whole of his capital had been withdrawn from the bank.

"Now you remember Wilton, Godfrey," added Mr. Temple, after communicating these circumstances; "he has been cashier since you were born, and has been long promised a share in our concern. This was the time to give it. He had very little capital to bring in, poor fellow, the mere savings from his salary; but a world of integrity and knowledge of business. So I raised the money for the Radnors on our estates, without consulting you, Godfrey, for I knew you would leave the matter to my discretion. Your name is added to the firm, so all is right. I think you cannot but be satisfied, for Wilton is a capital fellow."

"I don't like him, papa," said Laura, "his eyes are so keen and restless; and he is so conceited about his management. 'We'll show you now, Miss,' said he the other day in his usual unpleasant manner, between familiarity and servility, 'we'll show you how we can get on without that proud old Radnor. We'll add another wing to Templeton Court before long, Miss.'"

Godfrey laughed at Laura's prejudices against the old clerk, and told her she might rely on her papa's superior judgment and experience. Godfrey expressed

his satisfaction with every arrangement, but the addition of his own name to the firm; for, with his father's permission, he designed to fit himself for the church.

Mr. Temple sighed at the dispersion of his long-cherished hopes, but at once granted his son's request; fully convinced that without a decided vocation to the holy office, he would not have proposed to take its duties upon him.

Godfrey continued therefore, to devote some hours every day to study; but had always leisure for pleasant rambles, and cheerful evenings, with the gay young party once more assembled at Seymour House. Laura and Minna took him to see the schools, and very proud was Mr. Dilworth of the visit of a wrangler from Cambridge.

"Well, sir," said he; "I rejoice that we meet,—*Arceades ambo*. And how does learning flourish in your classic shades? Have you a Newton or a Milton ready to produce? Alas! sir, there are no giants of literature in the great world now-a-days; but the race is not extinct. They are still to be found, Mr. Godfrey, in the remote and obscure recesses of this great country. Many a glorious spirit perishes there, of whom it might be said,—

'Chill penury repress'd their noble rage,
And froze the genial current of the soul.'

But here, sir, we obviate such neglect,—here knowledge unfolds her ample page to the poorest, and nobly they profit by it. Would it please you, sir, to examine

my Grecians?—Xenophons, stand forth,—but my best man is now gone! Poor Dent!”

Laura shuddered, and the old man perceiving her emotion, continued, “I am sorry that I named him, miss;—but he was my Demosthenes. Sir, to you I may say that Porson was a dunce to him. Not a word would I suffer to be placed on his coffin, but of the tongue he delighted in. This is the inscription, sir—

JOSEPHUS DENT,
OBIIIT XXIV DIE DECEMBRIS, MDCCC * * *
ÆTATIS SUÆ XVIII.
REQUIESCAT IN PACE.

Simple but appropriate, I think, Sir. The legend for his monument delights the whole town, albeit they do not thoroughly comprehend its excellence. I intended to have written it in the noble language of Greece; but I found that our rude artists would have marred the characters, so I was driven to the Roman. The Latinity of it is, I flatter myself, among the few successful essays in this degenerate age. I shall take an opportunity of shewing it to you, my learned friend; the ladies,” he added, with a scornful laugh, “being a little incurious in these matters. I would produce it now, but that there is one passage which has not yet reached the true Ciceronian polish. On my own compositions, my criticisms are fastidious.”

The Xenophons, weary of their position, were heard to shuffle with their heavy shoes, and the master, recalled to his duties, waved his hand to them, and

bowed to Godfrey. The young Trinity man kindly heard the poor lads render their nearly incomprehensible Greek into scarcely less incomprehensible English. He gave due praise to Mr. Dilworth's efforts, for he could appreciate the labour and difficulty of cramming the youths with even this amount of knowledge, of no apparent use to them.

As they left the school, they met Harry Beverley, with Arthur Wilmot and the young Seymours. Harry was very much amused at Laura's description of their visit to the old schoolmaster. "I am certain," said Harry, "that the old gentleman's compositions in the lapidary style must be gems of absurdity. I'll call on the old fellow, flatter him out of a copy of the epitaph, and send it to *Punch*."

"Ah! I assure you, Miss Temple," said Arthur, seeing that this proposal gave Laura great pain; "I assure you that, whatever nonsense Harry Beverley may talk, he is too good-natured to be guilty of such treachery against the unsuspecting old master."

"Well, Mr. Righteous, I suppose I must yield, as usual," said Harry. "You have no idea, Laura, how thoroughly I am the slave of these two grave philosophers; nay, I fear I am becoming grave myself. But these are holyday times, so wish with me that to-morrow may be a gloriously fine day. We are to ramble to the Elm Wood, after an early dinner, and have a picnic after the most approved rustic fashion. All the old ones are to cut their stateliness and sobriety for this night only, and be jolly."

"Only think," said Caroline, "we are to have no servants. Every body must carry a basket, and every body must work. Harry and Arthur have agreed to erect a gipsy fireplace, to boil the kettle. Then we must all gather sticks for the fire, and make turf-seats for those who are idle. Minna, and Miss Aylmer, and Aunt Temple, will make the tea ready; they think you would be too unsteady, Laura. And then for visitors, we are to have papa and mama—Mr. Temple, if he will come—Mr. and Mrs. Melville, and Godfrey, who has given up running about. It will be charming."

And very charming both young and old found the shady wood, and the repast free from form. How scientifically the mathematicians erected the triangle, from which the kettle was to be suspended. How the wood rang with the merry laugh of the girls, as they ran about under the old elms collecting dry sticks. Laura and Minna, meanwhile, spread a snow-white cloth over the green turf, and arranged the tea equipage; and much mirth was caused by the freaks of the cups and saucers, which refused to stand firmly on such an unusual base. The tea-pot, too, was discovered to have its spout partially broken off, owing to the unsteady motions of Harry Beverley, the bearer of the china basket. Nevertheless, the mutilated vessel did its duty indifferently well. The elder gentlemen volunteered to cut and butter the bread, an operation which they performed with such philosophic gravity, yet with such diverting unskilfulness, that the merriment was loud and incessant. On the whole, the banquet was a marvellous success.

"How much happier we should be," said Caroline, "if we had no servants, and did every thing for ourselves, like the Swiss family in the Happy Island. It is so pleasant to feel oneself of some use; to make your own fire, and boil your own kettle."

"And clean your own kettle, as the kitchen-maid does, eh, Carry?" said Emma, quietly.

"And why not?" answered the independent young lady, seizing the kettle, and plucking a handful of grass, with which she began to rub its now sooty sides.

"Stop, my dear Caroline!" said Miss Aylmer, "there is no offence against morality in your cleaning a kettle, but a disregard of the fitness of things, which I wish you to comprehend. For instance, the kitchen-maid wears a dress suited to her employment. There is an obvious impropriety in your undertaking the office in a white muslin frock. Moreover, my child, the division of labour is one of the great blessings of civilized life. We ought all to labour on earth, but always in the place in society which God has allotted to us. Your education has fitted you for higher and more important duties than scouring kettles. Thank God for the privilege, my dear; but remember, that in fulfilling your duties, you have no more merit than the poor kitchen-maid has in polishing our pans and kettles. And, now, my dears, we will leave the kitchen-maid and her kettles, and let me see you open the ball."

Sir Henry Seymour had some skill on the violin. He had brought his instrument, and delighted the youthful party with old-fashioned reels and country

dances. Polkas and galloppes were beyond his skill, but the dancers timed their steps to papa's extraordinary tunes, and were soon whirling merrily on the turf.

The sound of music reached the ears of the village children, who ventured to draw near and gaze through the palings of the park on the light figures flitting under the shade of the wide-spreading elms.

"Do allow us, mama," said Caroline, flying out of the circle of dancers, "do allow us to bring the poor children into the park, and give them some cakes and fruit."

Lady Seymour willingly consented, and Caroline soon brought a troop of shy children into the sylvan banquetting-hall. In the midst of the children Laura was surprised to see her old friend Nanny Dent, leading a beautiful, intelligent-looking girl, apparently about twelve years of age, superior to the rest of the children in dress, and evidently shrinking from their society.

"Who is that noble-looking child?" asked Laura. "Why, Miss," said Nanny, "she's just a poor orphan God has sent us in t' place of him that's gone. She's my poor John's bairn, him that left some years sin to gang to Merrikay,—New England he called it,—more's the pity that Old England couldn't have sarved him; but he was always of a roving turn. Poor lad, none of his own folks ever saw him more! But last year a letter comes to us, and tells us he had scraped up a little money, and was coming home to us wi' his little lass, all he had left to care for. He had wed a foreign wife, and she and three of her bairns were laid i' that strange land. Well, we lighted o' their coming day

by day, and I made up a bit place behind our parlour, for this young lass, and John was to have poor Joe's bed. Aye, they've both gotten a cold bed of their own now, but far parted, poor lads; but God can bring us all together again at last, praised be his name. Now last week, Miss, comes a porter from yon railway up in t' town, and brought this poor lass and a great big trunk. Sore she cried, and telled us all her troubles. Her father and hersel', had come away in a ship, but when they got a sight of England, a great storm came on, somewhere about Liverpool, and knocked their ship to bits, and drowned t' last of my poor lads and half t' folks in t' ship. This poor thing, 'wi' all t' women were saved in a life-boat. Every body had been kind to her. They had found her trunk, and some bits o' things of her father's, lying on t' sands, and they sent them wi' poor Ailie down by railway to her nat'ral home. Poor lass! it was a sad, sad meeting,—and we not to see my own Johnny; but she tells me they found his poor corpse, and saw it decently buried, for he had money on him, and they honestly gave her what was left. But what cared we for money,—we are without bairns in our old age.”

Laura could not but weep with the forlorn old woman. Lady Seymour enquired if any papers had been saved, by which they could learn their son's intentions as to his child.

“ Yes, my lady,” said Nanny, “ we found some papers in her box, and Joseph thinks they have to do with money matters; but he's no scholar, and we thought of ;

troubling some of you gentlefolks to make them out for us. Come your ways, Ailie, and speak to Miss. She talks bonnily, but she doesn't mind rightly what she says. She talks grand like, and Joseph and me think she says things that aren't over true."

"I don't tell lies, grandmama," said the little American. "Why does nobody believe me? I wish I was at my own dear beautiful home again, where every body did as I ordered them. There I danced under the trees, and watched the fairy birds that lived in the flowers."

"Heard you ever the like of that, Miss?" said the distressed grandmother; "there she goes on talking of birds, and flowers, and fairies, and nought but penny history nonsense. And, Lord forgive us! when I pulled down our great Bible to please her, and showed her a picture of that wicked serpent deceiving Eve in Paradise, she would argue that she had seen him, and that he couldn't talk."

"I have seen that serpent," said the girl, "and I do not believe that he can speak, grandmama; but he is a wicked fairy, and he can make the little birds fall into his mouth from the blue sky; and he devours them. Not ugly brown birds, like those that roll in the dust here; but bright, beautiful creatures,—green, and scarlet, and blue,—that live among flowers as brilliant as they. Oh! I cannot bear this cold, dull country. I pine for my own sweet, green home, and the smell of the orange-flower!" The child sobbed violently.

The children were all hushed, and gathered round

the pretty foreigner, who continued to weep. Laura, who had experienced the dominion of such wild emotions, and felt sympathy for the little stranger's grief, took her hand and gently soothed her. She assured the child that she would find many friends in her new home, who would teach her to love them, and reconcile her to the little brown birds, and the pale flowers of England.

"And indeed, Nanny," said Caroline, "Alice speaks the truth about the frightful serpents of America, and the tiny humming birds that bury themselves in the flowers, and feed on their juices. To be sure they are not fairies, Alice, but very wonderful little creatures. I will bring you a book which contains an account of their habits. We will read it together, and you can tell me if it be true."

The dark eyes of the young girl sparkled as Caroline spoke to her. She sprung forward, threw her arms around Caroline, and kissed her.

"I love you dearly, Caroline," she cried; "and you shall be my friend. You can talk to me about my home, and you think, too, that I am not a bad girl."

"Oh dear, oh dear!" cried Nanny; "only hear her! Why you know, Ailie, you are only a poor girl, and you mustn't talk in that way to these ladies. You must say 'Madam,' and make your curtsy."

"I am a free girl: why should I bow like a slave?" said the young republican.

"You can be my friend, Alice, if you be good and true, though you are a poor girl," said Caroline. "Why should not Alice be my friend in this world, mama?"

E

When they are lying in the churchyard, no one can distinguish the poor girl from the rich."

"True, my dear child," said Lady Seymour, "every human being is a brother or a sister to you. All the good are worthy of being your friends, however poor they may be; and if Alice is a good girl, we will all be her friends."

"Nanny," said Laura, "will you let your granddaughter come to me for an hour every day. There are many things which I might be able to teach her."

"It's little enough she knows, Miss," said Nanny. "My poor Joe was a scholar, but she's none. I can tell that she cares for nae books but silly babbles. Then, for knitting and sewing, she can do naught. But worse than that, God help her! she has never learnt to love him and do his blessed will. Please to larn her that, Miss, and God prosper you."

Laura sighed, and felt that the unhappy stranger had too many points of resemblance to herself. Perceiving that her offer was equally agreeable to the child and the grandmother, she resolved to consult Miss Aylmer as to the best means of correcting the young stranger's defects, a task which self-experience taught her was most difficult. The village children, meanwhile, after having feasted to their full satisfaction on cakes and dainties, danced, rudely indeed, but merrily, to the ready violin of Sir Henry, till they had tired themselves and their good-natured musician.

Alice gazed with wonder, nay, almost with terror, on the children, carried away by the excitement of the

dance. She had lived among the languid and helpless females of a southern climate, had been reared in luxury and indulgence, and, as may be conceived, was disgusted with the rude manners and language of the rustics among whom she was suddenly placed. She accepted fruit from the hands of Laura and Caroline, but shrunk fastidiously from the crowd of village children. By Lady Seymour's advice Nanny returned home with Alice, after Laura had promised to see the little orphan the next day.

CHAPTER VII.

No more the midnight fairy tribe I view,
All in the merry moonlight tippling dew.

CRABBE.

LAURA confided to Miss Aylmer, as they walked homewards, her plans for the improvement of the young stranger. "No one can understand the faults of the unfortunate child so thoroughly as I," said she. "Her character contains abundance of defects, but, I hope, no very great evil. Tell me, my dear Miss Aylmer, how I ought to proceed in cultivating what I believe to be the rich soil of her mind."

"In the first place, Laura," said Miss Aylmer, "I would have you eradicate, gradually, and with a discreet and gentle hand, the weeds that have sprung up in that neglected soil. Then, lead her by reason and persuasion to turn the strong current of her will from the worship of self to the worship of God. Teach her to think lightly of all knowledge when weighed in the scale against the knowledge of God, obedience to him, and love to her fellow-creatures."

"How much I am indebted to you, my kind friend," said Laura, "for revealing to me all my faults during that fortunate visit to Seymour House! I remember

that on the first day of my visit, in my foolish pride, I thought it strange that Lady Seymour should make a friend of her governess ; but I know now, Miss Aylmer, the value of your friendship. How fortunate is Minna in having so long enjoyed it ! It is this privilege that has made her happy and beloved. Do you know, Miss Aylmer, that I tremble to see her so much admired, for I fear lest she should marry some one whom I cannot approve of ? In fact I wish her to be my sister, and so, I am sure, does Godfrey ; but then he must not speak yet,—he must be a fellow of his college,—he is ambitious of that honourable distinction. Papa says that Godfrey will be rich enough, and that he must leave college-livings for poor men, and content himself with a curacy. Oh, Miss Aylmer, if Godfrey were to marry Minna, what a happy parish that would be which they had the care of !”

“Laura, Laura,” replied Miss Aylmer, laughing ; “you are relapsing into your old habit of castle-building. You had better let these young people manage their own love-affairs, and turn your thoughts to your own weighty undertaking. It will not be without difficulties ; but the struggle will be profitable to you, and I trust that, with God’s help, you will do some good :—but here we are at home, so good night, my child, and while you labour at this young stranger’s education, I will endeavour to teach Joseph and Nanny a more rational way of managing their young charge.”

Laura set about her task in good earnest, and no easy task it was to instruct a child, accustomed to be waited on by slaves, and indulged in all her capricious humours.

Her father, after various struggles in the pursuit of fortune, had finally settled in Florida, and there married a lady of Spanish blood, and of some wealth, but of delicate constitution. Three of their children had been successively carried off by an early death. Alice, neglected during their sickness, and afterwards, for the sake of peace, indulged by her languid mother with the gratification of every wish, became beyond measure wilful. John Dent, employed in the superintendence of his slaves, and absorbed in the accumulation of wealth, thought little about his child, till he found she was all that was left to him. He then perceived the consequences of his neglect, and determined to take her to England, and procure for her the best education that money could purchase. What wealth he brought with him was never known,—the sea swallowed up the gold which he had ventured soul and body to heap up. The child scarcely regretted the loss of a father she had never learned to love; but she mourned for the mother she had really loved, and for the luxuries she had lost. Laura's zeal and perseverance were inexhaustible. She had no difficulty in inducing Alice to receive her instructions. The little girl, brought up in luxury, willingly left the small, inconvenient cottage of her grandmother, to spend an hour or two among the elegances of Temple Court, although her visit involved the necessity of attention to the teaching of her new friend. By Miss Aylmer's advice, Laura commenced on the true foundation. She spent days and weeks in unveiling to Alice the wonders of God's goodness, and in convincing her of the necessity of entire

obedience to his will. The naturally sound understanding of the child soon enabled her to comprehend this great truth, and reap the practical fruits of it in habits of meekness, forbearance, and activity. The cultivation of her mind became then a work of little labour. United to her strong intellect, Alice was endowed with a remarkably quick apprehension, and her rapid progress in useful knowledge, and improvement in manners, fully repaid Laura for her exertions. But, in truth, Laura's labours were highly beneficial to herself, and she was repaid by the acquisition of habits of thinking and speaking with accuracy and clearness.

Laura was now happier than she had ever been before. She spent much time with the villagers, striving to alleviate their distress, and raise their moral character; and labouring to instruct the young. She now experienced what blessings may arise from making friends of the mammon of unrighteousness.

Godfrey had returned to the university, and was now continuing his studies and enjoying the contemplative life which he loved, as a fit preparation for his future active duties in the church. Mr. Temple spent his time almost wholly at Templeton Court, contented to leave business matters to Mr. Wilton, and devoting himself to country sports and social intercourse with his neighbours. Laura never neglected her young pupil's morning lessons, and when the dinner party consisted entirely of gentlemen, the young child spent her evening in the private apartments of her zealous teacher.

One morning, Alice, after recounting to Laura some

of the fanciful traditions of Florida, which she had learned in her infancy, expressed her regret for the loss of her faith in those beautiful fables. Laura assured her that she herself still loved the pretty fairy tales of the nursery, but suffered them neither to trespass on more useful reading, nor to influence her fancy as they had once done.

"But, dear Miss Laura," said Alice, "even in this quiet land there are strange creatures,—you will not allow me to say wicked genii! Yet I almost think I saw one, some time ago, and again, last night, in the shrubbery."

"Tell me all about it, Alice," said Laura, smiling, "and probably I may unravel the mystery."

"Do you remember," said Alice, "that one evening, when you first began to teach me to be a good girl, I came here for some wine for my grandmother? You were in this room, playing on the harp and singing. After I left you, as I was passing through the shrubbery, in the dusk, I saw beneath this window, an ugly, dark, scowling creature, looking into the room. I gave a little cry, and the creature turned round and made frightful faces at me. Then I said, 'You are a runaway slave, and I will call the servants to set the blood-hounds on you.' I did not know then that such a practice was cruel. He frowned at me still more sternly, and howled out some gibberish that frightened me very much. I was then sure he was not a man, and I cried out, 'Go, wicked genii, you cannot hurt me, I am not a bad girl now!' I ran home very ill with fright; but I said

nothing to grandfather and grandmother, for I thought they would not believe me. I ought to have told you, Miss Laura; but I was afraid of offending you, for you had told me that there were no magicians nor fairies, except in tales. So I had almost forgotten it, till last night, when I left you, I saw the same hideous thing at your window. I crept through the shubbery, and got away without being seen; but I determined to tell you this morning."

Laura was startled by this story; but she assured Alice, that though the intruder might be some impertinent, or even malicious person, it certainly was neither genii nor magician. Still, after Alice had left her, she was uneasy, and wished her papa had been at home, that she might communicate the story to him. Her aunt, too, was on a visit to a friend for a few days, and Laura brooded over the mystery the whole day.

Mr. Temple returned to dinner, but was accompanied by a party of gentlemen; she had therefore no opportunity of conversing with him. She made many efforts to divert her thoughts, but in vain. As she did not join the party at dinner, she was left alone in her own pretty room. She tried drawing, reading, and music, but was unable to command her attention. She resolved to see her father that night, as soon as his guests had left him. While she sat watching the clock, and anxiously waiting the opportunity of relieving her mind, she insensibly relapsed into her old romantic fancies. She trembled at every sound, and at last resolved to ring for her maid to sit with her. As she crossed the room

to the bell, she glanced at the window that looked on the shrubbery, and, to her horror, saw the face of a man. She tried to shriek, but had not the power of utterance, and remained for some minutes motionless and almost insensible. The intruder then seemed to have caught her eye, for he immediately disappeared.

She was suddenly seized with the fear of being murdered, and, after many ineffectual efforts, recovering the power of moving, she rushed out of the room. She had to cross a spacious hall in order to reach the dining-room, and her overwrought imagination peopled it with shadowy figures, gliding in the obscure distance. She rushed, almost frantic, into the cheerful dining-room, crying out, "Oh, papa, the house is surrounded by a band of robbers! We shall all be murdered! I have this moment seen the leader—a hideous wretch!"

At that moment her eye rested on the dark, heavy countenance of Mr. Wilton, who was sitting with her father. Conviction flashed on her mind, and with all her former impetuosity, she exclaimed, "Mr. Wilton, it was you!"

Mr. Temple looked with astonishment and vexation alternately at his daughter and his friend.

"What can you mean, Laura?" asked he.

"I am ashamed to have alarmed you, papa," said she; "but I was really terrified. It would seem that Mr. Wilton has more than once taken the liberty to watch me through the window of my room; and I certainly mistook him for a robber."

"For a bandit-chief!" said Mr. Wilton, sarcastically.

"I am certainly not flattered by Miss Temple's mistake. I forbear to defend myself; but perhaps Mr. Temple will kindly make known to you the powerful motive which prompted me to listen to that enchanting voice, which I was not permitted openly to hear."

"Laura," said Mr. Temple, much confused, "I am compelled, with some reluctance, to tell you, that my old friend Wilton has got a fancy into his head, that he is in love with my little girl; and he proposes, with my consent, to become her husband. What does my Laura say to this offer?"

"Papa," answered she, "are you in earnest? Can you ask me to leave you and marry any one;—but, above all, can you ask me to marry Mr. Wilton?"

"Your father's *ci-devant* servant," said Mr. Wilton. "I see you scorn my presumption, young lady."

"That consideration would certainly not influence my daughter," said Mr. Temple. "You are now my partner, and therefore her equal, Wilton. But you must remember that you are nearly as old as I am, and your pursuits and habits are widely different from hers. You could scarcely expect her to accept your offer at once, and I regret that you forced me to this premature disclosure of your sentiments."

"At no time, papa," said Laura, "under no circumstances, shall I ever be induced to marry Mr. Wilton. My refusal is decisive and irrevocable."

Mr. Wilton's countenance for a moment was agitated. He then bowed to Mr. Temple, looked vindictively at Laura, and left the room without uttering a word. Mr.

Temple at first was inclined to follow him and soothe his wounded feelings ; but, on reflection, thought it prudent to leave the cure to time and occupation.

"How could that presumptuous man offer to me, papa," said Laura. "I dislike him more than I ought to dislike a fellow-creature. I have lately sat more alone in the evening than I would wish, because he has been often with you. Why does he come here so incessantly?"

"I might answer," said Mr. Temple, smiling, "that you were the fair attraction. We have in fact had lately very important business to transact. I have been raising a very large sum of money on mortgage, to pay off the family of poor Radnor. This money, I have to-night placed in Wilton's hands, so our business transactions are concluded. But I am sorry, my dear Laura, that you wounded his feelings so much by your extravagant fancy about villainous-looking robbers. Your offensive epithets will, I fear, linger disagreeably in his recollection ; and they are undeserved, for though he is plain and unpolished, he has been a faithful servant and is a first-rate man of business."

"But it was mean and impertinent to listen at my window, papa," replied Laura. "I wish he had not become your partner, papa. Godfrey, too, does not like him,—Godfrey, who has no prejudices and whims as I have, does not like him, and thinks him cunning and insincere."

"But I know him better than either you or Godfrey," said Mr. Temple. "I know him to be a worthy fellow,

but I was far from wishing to bestow my daughter on him. Now go to bed, my child, and instead of dreaming of banditti, dream of the glory of your first offer."

Laura tried to laugh, but the effort ended in a flood of tears. She was dissatisfied with her own want of self-control, with Mr. Wilton's manner, and with her father's unbounded confidence in him. She retired to bed, but, in spite of her father's admonitions, she dreamt that Wilton, in the orthodox brigand costume, was carrying her off through a gloomy forest. She was very glad, when she awoke, to find herself in her own comfortable room at Templeton Court.

CHAPTER VIII.

Bear this! bear all!
She says I am not fair, that I lack manners.
..... and that she could not love me
Were men as rare as Phoenix.

SHAKSPEARE.

MISS TEMPLE returned the next day, and soon knew every detail of the adventure of the previous evening. She could not but approve of the rejection of Mr. Wilton's suit, though she shook her head at the strong expressions which Laura had used in her refusal. "It was not kind to apply such language to your father's friend; but I allow, that under circumstances so exciting, it is difficult to be discreet. But we will talk no more about this unhappy affair. Your papa expects Mr. Wilton here, to-morrow, and I earnestly hope, that he will prudently appear to forget his disappointment."

As they were at breakfast the next morning, the post-bag was brought in. "Here is a letter from Wilton," said Mr. Temple. "Oh! Laura, you are to blame for this. I fear he is not coming to-day,—he has not been able to get over his mortification."

He opened and glanced over the letter, and to the terror of Laura and her aunt, he sank back in his chair, pale and motionless; large drops stood on his brow, and

he was evidently unable to speak. Laura flung her arms round him, crying, "My own papa, speak to me! What dreadful thing has happened?"

Miss Temple bathed his forehead with cold water, and after a few minutes he recovered so far as to burst into tears.

"Laura!" he exclaimed, convulsively embracing his child, "Laura, you were right,—he is a villain. Wilton has ruined us. We are beggars, and my name will be disgraced. He has robbed us of all and absconded."

"Nay, dear papa," said Laura, "he may have carried off money, but the estate is ours, the house with all it contains is ours."

"Nothing is ours, my child," said the afflicted father; "all that is left belongs to those who have trusted to the honour of Charles Temple. They shall not be deceived. We will give up all but our integrity. Read the scoundrel's letter."

With streaming eyes Laura read the base deceiver's letter.

MR. TEMPLETON,—The glories of Templeton Court are passed away. By this day's post Gray will receive my orders to close the bank of 'Temple and Co.' You are absolutely insolvent. It would not have been just that I should share your misfortunes. Thanks to timely precautions, I am not quite penniless. For thirty years I toiled in your service, an obedient slave. I owed you no gratitude when you were compelled by circumstances

to make me your partner. Long before that event, I had taken the liberty of trafficking a little on my own account, with the money under my control, and was successful. Encouraged by this success, when I became your partner, I speculated still more deeply; but uniform ill success has pursued me since that ill-omened distinction was pressed upon me. I involved the concern in utter ruin; but at the last, if Laura Temple had accepted the *hideous wretch* whose looks made her shudder, I would have concealed our difficulties, and joined you in making superhuman exertions to rise above them. Scorned and rejected, I have made myself master of the few thousands of available cash. With this I shall live in a distant land, where David Wilton will be respected, when the grandeur of Templeton Court shall be in the dust. The property vested in the funds, in the name of Laura Temple, I might have been tempted to leave untouched, had my addresses been rejected with any degree of delicacy; but her scorn and derision steeled my heart. As one of her trustees, I have sold out and carried off the fair lady's portion,—a trifling compensation for her injurious treatment. I please myself with the thought that her haughty nature must bend to earn her bread.

I bore the yoke long,—I now triumph over you all.
You will not soon forget the name of,

DAVID WILTON.

Laura was grieved to find that her extravagant fancies and indiscreet expressions had precipitated the

ruin of her father ; but he kindly consoled her, declaring his conviction that every additional day of power would have only added to the liabilities of the Templeton estates.

With a power and energy hitherto dormant, Laura set to work to act for herself. Her father was too ill to make any exertion ; but, with his permission, she communicated the disastrous state of their affairs to Sir Henry Seymour, and begged his advice. The kind-hearted baronet and his lady hastened to Templeton Court, and listened to all the details which Laura could give. Sir Henry then set out for the town, and there found his worst fears realized. The bank was closed. The assembled merchants stood aghast at a catastrophe so unlooked for. Many of them grieved not less for the disasters of the kind and liberal Mr. Temple, than for their own losses. The grey-headed clerk, Mr. Gray, put into Sir Henry's hands documents, which proved, that the frauds of Wilton had loaded Mr. Temple with liabilities, which even the sale of his estate, would scarcely suffice to answer, for that estate was already burdened with a mortgage for the large sum which his knavish partner had carried off. The baronet returned to Temple Court and reported the results of his melancholy inquiry. In a few days Mr. Temple was sufficiently recovered to look into his affairs. All his energy seemed to revive. He gave orders for every necessary measure, and sent for his son, whose presence, he felt, would be a comfort and support to his family.

Godfrey felt prouder of his father in that moment of adversity than he had done when the old man shone among the noble and wealthy of the land.

It was agreed to give up every thing to the creditors of the firm. Miss Temple's fortune had been withdrawn from the funds to assist in paying off the large sum due to the Radnors: she was therefore involved in the calamities of her family. A small estate, the settlement of Mrs. Temple, was to devolve to Laura on her mother's death. This little property, with the reluctant consent of the trustees, Laura resigned. Nothing remained but a farm, recently bequeathed to Godfrey by a godfather, of which the rental was about one hundred pounds. Godfrey had not the power to dispose of it till he was twenty-five; but he declared his intention of settling it, when that period arrived, on Miss Temple, and of supporting himself by taking pupils till he obtained his fellowship.

Mr. Temple determined to visit Mexico and some parts of South America, hoping that something might still be raised from the unlucky speculations of Wilton in the mines of that continent. In Rio Janeiro and Buenos Ayres large sums were due from merchants whose bonds the bank had held, and whom he feared that his dishonest partner would draw on. From this costly voyage Mr. Temple hoped to realize what would help to liquidate every claim against him, and to that one object he confined all his wishes. Dearly as he loved his children, he would not listen to his creditors, who liberally offered to give up a certain sum for their

support. "No," he constantly exclaimed, "not one penny is ours."

Templeton Court, with its rich furniture and costly decorations, was to be put up for sale. It was a hard trial for them all to leave the happy home of their childhood; but they bore it bravely. Miss Temple met with a pretty lodging in the village, and gladly hired it, that she might remain near the friends who had been proved in adversity. Laura chose to remain with her aunt during Mr. Temple's long absence, though Lady Seymour entreated her to become one of her family.

"No, Lady Seymour," said Laura, "I am determined to be independent. I will try to work. Help me to decide what to do. Do you think that, with Aunt Temple's help, I could conduct a school?"

Miss Temple shook her head. "It will not do, Laura. You are too young, and I am too old, for such a task. No parents would entrust their daughters with us. I have, moreover, bitterly experienced my inability to teach."

"Oh, my dear aunt!" said Laura, "you will not often meet with a pupil so wilful and perverse as I was."

"I think Miss Temple is right," said Lady Seymour; "the charge of a school brings with it a heavy responsibility, and would require greater labour than Miss Temple is able to endure, and more experience than you, my dear Laura, can have acquired."

"Well," answered Laura, "I reluctantly relinquish my Utopian scheme of diffusing the light of knowledge

over a benighted world, and of introducing a thorough reform in female education. So you, my dear aunt, must remain here, teaching Alice and visiting the poor. Lady Seymour will, I hope, believe, that I am capable of undertaking the office of governess to children younger than myself, and will find some parents willing to give me a trial. I am prepared to meet with many difficulties; nay, I almost wish to find difficulties, for I know how much I need self-discipline,—do I not, Miss Aylmer? We will each, therefore, follow our several paths of duty in good heart; and if papa returns safe and well, and Godfrey's success enables him to help us, we will all live together in our own dear village, where, I trust, we shall be as happy as if we had never lived in Stately Hall. May I picture to myself this Utopia, Miss Aylmer?

"I think you may, my dear good child," said Miss Aylmer, "and I believe that you will be happy. The poor are loaded with fewer responsibilities than the rich. With the gift of rank and wealth is entailed the arduous, but glorious duty, of doing the greatest good to the greatest number."

"I shall ever remember that favourite maxim of yours, Miss Aylmer," said Laura. I once hoped that I should have the opportunity of practising the maxim in a school; but I now fear that I shall have little scope for the exercise of it. And now, dear Lady Seymour, do you approve of my governess plan? I have gained some experience in instructing Alice."

"I do approve of it, Laura," answered Lady Seymour;

"I think that you have decided wisely. I shall have no difficulty in selecting a family in which your talents will be usefully employed. If you find the labours of teaching too great for your strength, remember that, during Mr. Temple's absence, I am your guardian."

It was at Seymour House that the whole of Mr. Temple's family found a home, during the painful progress of the sale of his property. It was under that hospitable roof that the blessed fruits of adversity began to appear, in stimulating the energy and confirming the integrity of Mr. Temple, in the resignation and forbearance of his sister, and in the tender affection and vigorous exertions of his children.

A pretty cottage in the village, usually occupied by the widow of some departed vicar, was hired by Miss Temple. It stood on a tiny lawn, facing the east. A little shubbery on the north separated it from the village. The garden, on the south and west, was of such moderate dimensions that a lady-gardener might cultivate it with her own hands. Here Laura, assisted by her young friends, formed a little Eden, ornamented with many a favourite shrub and flower brought from the loved and lost home. In laying out and planting her garden, and fitting up the cottage, Laura's exuberant activity found employment. Miss Temple's own furniture, brought from the now untenanted mansion, amply supplied to the new home every elegant comfort. What was useless or superfluous was sold to form a fund for their now limited charities.

The sum raised by the sale of the whole of Mr. Temple's

property, was found nearly sufficient to answer all claims upon him. The creditors unanimously declared that they were fully satisfied; but Mr. Temple was determined, that, if it were possible, they should be paid to the uttermost farthing. With a lightened heart he prepared for his voyage to Mexico, and from thence to Rio Janeiro. If God spared him to return to England, he proposed to begin the labour of life once more, and, by his talents for business, earn the subsistence of his beloved family and himself.

Miss Temple with her faithful maid, now a 'maid of all work,' occupied her new abode, and was, as usual, employed in the active duties of charity. Laura remained with her aunt till Lady Seymour should discover some field for the exercise of her new vocation. In the meantime, Laura continued her lessons to Alice Dent more diligently than ever, and the little girl's progress was rapid and pleasing.

"So, Miss Laura," said Mr. Dilworth, as Laura and her aunt entered his school-room one morning; "so, Miss, they tell me that you wish to become a junior member of our learned body. It is the fashion of these days, for females to aim at plucking some twigs from the tree of knowledge. I dispute the wisdom of the attempt,—I dispute, indeed, the possibility of their success. The less worthy gender,—pardon me, young lady,—the less worthy gender, as the great masters of language have decided to consider them, are very well among their needles and spinning-wheels, but incapable, ~~incapable~~, I say,—of rising above the common stan-

dard of their sex. Who ever heard of a female Homer, or of a Newton in petticoats? Look at Nelly Butler,—could she ever have been made to pass the *Pons asinorum*, or construe a page of Livy? Yet the woman is very well in her place, and teaches the female children to sew a seam very successfully. No, I tried a niece of mine awhile in the school, absurdly hoping that one day she might aid me in minor matters. 'Twas all in vain,—she never got beyond ruling a copy-book.

“Well, Miss, if you take my advice, you will not attempt to teach girls what is beyond their comprehension. Let me see,—there’s English Grammar:—yes, I advise you to try English Grammar. Lindley Murray might do for you,—a tolerable grammarian, and well received; though old Fisher is my authority. Fisher made such men as I am.”

Laura murmured her thanks, and questioned not the truth of the old man’s last proposition, hoping so to escape; but the schoolmaster continued his monologue.

“Let me consider,—I suppose your modish young ladies must learn history,—for what end I cannot see. And what historians can they read? What historians have we now? Herodotus,—Thucydides,—Livy,—these were the men;—but their works are sealed books except to us, the learned. But what did our grandmothers know of history? There’s many a clever woman without history. Now, there’s Mrs. Hodge,—I have her two sons, and dull dogs they are,—she civilly asks me to tea on many a half-holyday. That woman talks about matters that are going on about her, like a newspaper;

but as for history, she would likely enough think that Alexander was born in St. James's Palace; or that Julius Cæsar waged war with Oliver Cromwell, and was grandfather to our queen. If you must give your pupils some of the rudiments of history, keep to that of our own country. There is one Mr. Pinnock has given his name to a very fair history, for a modern one, with explanations of hard words."

Laura inwardly protested against the whole series of Pinnock's, but did not speak. The inexorable school-master proceeded to lecture on poetry.

"English poetry wants the loftiness of that of the ancients, but it is suitable enough to the capacity of your sex. Mr. Milton, to be sure, was the author of some pretty lines, beginning,—

‘Yet once more all ye laurels.’

Some of his lines have a meaning far beyond female comprehension. But there is Mr. Gray—very good. He has a poem called an ‘Elegy in a Country Church-yard.’ That I have always approved of, and I recommend it to your perusal. Mr. Pope is not bad. I thought of giving ‘The Messiah’ to my English boys to learn during the Christmas holydays; but the lines are too long for their dull ears. My own classes rejoice in the flowing measure:—

‘Rise, crown’d with light, imperial Salem, rise!’

Mr. Pope writes like a scholar. But you may get on without the poets, young lady."

With difficulty Laura escaped from further dicta-

tion, and bade adieu to the conceited schoolmaster. She returned, somewhat weary of his lecture, and found Lady Seymour at the cottage, with letters in her hand.

"Now, my dear Laura," said she, "I have some *governess-ships* to propose to you. First, I have a letter from my sister-in-law, Lady Beverley. She will be glad to have you for her two daughters. Her proposals are kind and liberal."

"Oh, no!" exclaimed Laura, "I cannot be governess to Harry Beverley's sisters. Forgive me, Lady Seymour. I know the duty of humility; but I would willingly avoid this particular act of abasement."

"It is no abasement, my child," said Lady Seymour; "but I yield to your wish, though I think you are under the influence of a prejudice. Now for our next. Will you undertake the three children of Mrs. Ainsworth, of Wolstan Priory. I fear that they have been much neglected, though Mrs. Ainsworth is a notorious manager, always active, industrious, and orderly; but the children are certainly somewhat rude. Mr. Ainsworth is a good sort of man, of mediocre abilities, who leads an easy life, and permits Mrs. Ainsworth to manage his affairs as well as her own. They are, however, highly respected, and as the lady is just, liberal, and well conducted, I should have no hesitation in consigning you to her."

Laura sighed, for there was something chilling in the description of the Ainsworths; but recalling her good resolutions, she thanked Lady Seymour, and declared her wish to make her *debut* at Wolstan Priory.

CHAPTER IX.

My name is Order;
And by this staff of office, that commands you.
MASSINGER.

THE parting from her beloved aunt was the most painful trial that Laura had yet experienced; but Minna Seymour soothed her grief by promising to visit Miss Temple every day and cheer her solitary life. And then the good old lady flattered herself that this going out as a governess was but an experiment, and that Laura would soon return, and so was satisfied. The distance of Wolstan Priory from Templeton was not more than twenty miles, and to this new home Lady Seymour conducted Laura, and there left her, after doing her best to excite Mrs. Ainsworth's kindly feelings, by a recital of her young friend's misfortunes and praiseworthy conduct. Laura saw Lady Seymour's departure with scarcely suppressed agitation. Mrs. Ainsworth, who seemed busily employed with needlework, treated her with distant politeness. Laura fancied this coldness was a tacit reproach for her idleness. She begged leave to retire, for the purpose of arranging her packages, and when she had reached her lonely little chamber, sat down and wept, and so relieved her pent up emotions.

The housemaid who came to assist her, promised to call her early the next morning, as Mrs. Ainsworth requested she would be in the school-room at seven o'clock. As Laura laid her head on her strange pillow, she felt that she had never till now really known the change in her condition. There was something chilling, even in the plain and scanty fittings of her bedroom, which convinced her that she was now only a governess. A short and bitter glance over the past, not unmingled with self-reproach, was however soon succeeded by bright hopes of the future, and by that peace of mind which is never denied to the afflicted who seek for it earnestly. She slept soundly, and obeyed with a struggle Martha's warning call at six o'clock on a bleak February morning.

At seven, Martha conducted her to the school-room, a spacious and handsome apartment, but very cold, where she found the three children, and Mrs. Ainsworth, ready to commence morning prayers. After these devotions, breakfast was served, and Laura was introduced to her pupils. Emily was a fine animated girl of thirteen; Herbert, about twelve years of age, was very like his eldest sister, but rude and clownish in manner; and Annabella was a dull girl of ten. They spoke little in presence of their mother, of whom they seemed to stand in awe; but Laura observed secret signals passing among them, of which she was evidently the subject. She was, however, silent, thinking it imprudent to begin so early the task of reproof.

After breakfast, Mrs. Ainsworth pointed out to her young governess, a long written paper suspended on the

wall of the room. It was a code of laws framed for the regulation of her family, and fixing the occupations of every hour of the day. Mrs. Ainsworth requested that Laura would attend strictly to these rules, as her motto was, "Order in all things." The wisdom of this maxim Laura could not dispute, and she felt angry with herself, as a rebellious feeling rose in her heart against this stern decree. She was then left with her pupils, who immediately began to indemnify themselves for their late constraint, and became so noisy and unruly, that although she possessed considerable firmness, she with difficulty succeeded in settling them to any lessons. Still more determination and greater efforts were required, to obtain from them the respect which she judged it prudent to exact from the first. The children told her that they had already had two governesses. Laura discovered that the first, an English governess, had taught the children to deceive their mother; the second, "Mademoiselle," as they called her, had only taught them to disobey her.

Miss Bristow, whom Mrs. Ainsworth still commemorated as "a very well-mannered person," had been in the habit of receiving her employer's commands with demonstrations of profound respect, but nevertheless succeeded in deceiving her. Fortunately for her pupils, the young lady concluded by eloping with the son of Mr. Ainsworth's steward. Though Mrs. Ainsworth still persisted in maintaining that the young man was the real offender, she could not consistently with her principles see the young person again.

"Mademoiselle" had taught her pupils to speak French wonderfully well, considering the difficulty of teaching them any thing at all. Besides a general neglect of Mrs. Ainsworth's rules and regulations, Mademoiselle insisted on giving her lessons by the way of conversation, and when Mrs. Ainsworth produced, as a useful manual, a huge old volume, "*Chambaud's Complete French Master*," the governess, with a violent scream, as Emily declared, cried out, "*Cela fait fremir!*" She added to her offences by yawning over the English readings marked out by Mrs. Ainsworth. But English poetry drove Mademoiselle into open rebellion. She heretically pronounced Shakspeare to be far beneath Racine, "*dans la peinture des caractères;*" and as to the *Paradise Lost*, decided that "*il y a trop de lenteur dans la marche de la sujet.*" Emily, in spite of Laura's grave looks, would often mimic Mademoiselle's broken English,—
 "Dis is no *la poésie*. I find not *la rime*. Dis is not vat you call de verse white.—Ah, vous risez, Mademoiselle Emily,—I wish to say, *les vers qui ne sont pas rimés*. And den Sare Scott, madame, *quel poète!* De leetle girl must not read him, *je n'y puis consentir*. She must read verses *qui marchent comme la poésie française,—grande et majestique; mais ces chansons là jump and run like la poésie enivrée.*"

Laura begged the little mimic to desist, and as she looked on these wayward and ill-taught children, she sighed over the dispersion of her cherished visions of the "delightful task" of education. She felt that with her slender influence as governess, she was but feebly

armed for the struggle which lay before her; but her nature was hopeful, and she addressed herself vigorously to the task. Mrs. Ainsworth visited her during the morning and delivered a long initiatory lecture, 'explaining and strongly enforcing each particular regulation in the elaborate list. Laura did her best, but found her headstrong pupils so unmanageable, that not one task was properly completed. Tedious and unprofitable was her first day of trial, and day after day left her dispirited and hopeless. After the experience of ten weary days, Laura, according to a promise, sent to Minna a journal of her monotonous life.

"DEAR MINNA,—Tell dear Lady Seymour to have no fear of my relapsing into the wild fancies of my early days. I have now discovered that a real governess cannot possibly fancy herself a heroine of romance. Mrs. Ainsworth's stern and immovable countenance chills every feeling, and effectually extinguishes any little spark of romance.

"As to good Mr. Ainsworth, he spends his morning in riding, smoking, or copying wonderful facts from the newspapers into a huge commonplace book, a labour which he evidently believes will be useful to succeeding ages. After his dinner, he talks sentimentally of his early loves, dwells with unction on his own youthful fascinations, and tells how he frowned on the lovely and graceful that idolized him, and threw himself at the feet of the haughty Juno who now owns his name.

"This nonsense, dearest Minna, is but the glittering

frost-work,—now comes the solid cake. Here is a day of my busy life.

“Seven o’clock, A.M.—Required to be punctually in the school-room with my reluctant pupils, who resist the decree as stoutly as may be; but panting nurses toil after them not in vain, and bring them at last to their chill destination. Here Mrs. Ainsworth, always in time, reads a very long form of prayer, very devoutly, but very slowly. Then the children read the lessons for the day, and I read a commentary on the lessons, which falls, alas! on unheeding ears, for at this part of the service my young charge become weary, restless, and hungry. I ventured to suggest to Mrs. Ainsworth, that they might perhaps be more attentive, if the reading of Scripture were deferred till after breakfast; but I received her invariable answer,—‘I always consider my plans well before I adopt them, and then never change them.’ If every body was as firm in purpose, dear Minna, I fancy that the world would make but little progress. How I lament that all this must necessarily create in the children a distaste for the most important work of life—their religious duties. I long to shew to the children the beauty of living religion; for here religion wears an unlovely form, and is a dead thing. So I am resolved to go on labouring and hoping in my vocation.

“Breakfast then gives us a seasonable relief. After that meal we plunge into the course of labours arbitrarily laid down by our dictator. History is first in order. Yesterday morning, after much trouble, I had

Herbert fairly engaged in Roman history, and, with a map before me, was tracing for him the supposed track of Hannibal across the Alps,—Mrs. Ainsworth entered: ‘I believe, Miss Temple,’ said she, ‘you have not understood my directions. The geography lesson commences at eleven. I wish my plans to be strictly adhered to.’ I suggested that, in this case, explanation by means of a map was necessary. ‘Let the march of Hannibal be explained during the hour devoted to geography. I like all things in order, Miss Temple.’ Oh, the horrors of this rigid rule! My beloved Fairy Order, here assumes the repulsive form of the Fairy Violante of our nursery lore, whom we used to detest so heartily.

“We labour in the ‘order of the course’ till twelve. We then walk for an hour. The grounds are extensive, and really beautiful; but we are strictly confined within a certain limited circuit. Our walks would be interesting and delightful, if we were permitted to ramble at will. The children dislike this formal, boarding-school promenade, and I have much difficulty in restraining the little victims from breaking their bounds.

“At one o’clock Mrs. Ainsworth meets us punctually at a particular spot in the park, and we proceed to visit the poor. This is a duty which I loved at my own dear Templeton; but, at Wolstan, charity is clothed in such dismal weeds, that she becomes by no means pleasant of aspect. Mrs. Ainsworth is liberal to the poor, and dispenses food, clothing, and education, with unsparing
and; but her lectures, her censures, her inquiries, and

cross-examinations, are still more unsparingly dealt out. She certainly has the wish to do good, and yet she is feared and avoided by her pensioners.

"I followed Mrs. Ainsworth, endeavouring, but I fear in vain, to excite in the rude and impertinent children some interest in the state of their dependents. In the cottages of the poor, I see the tears forced from many an eye by Mrs. Ainsworth's stern comments on their want of economy, industry, neatness, and order. There is truth, I allow, in every word, but truth unkindly spoken. I am already becoming a favourite with the old people, and the children see, with astonishment, that a little sympathy and a few kind words are received with greater gratitude than their mama's large donations. I do not, of course, point this out to the children; but they have perceived it, and will, I have no doubt, profit by the observation.

"At two we dine. Mrs. Ainsworth still hovers about us to see that the affair is conducted with due propriety, and for this I am truly grateful; for her presence is a restraint on the rudeness and violence of Emily and Herbert, and so I eat my dinner in peace. I am not, however, without hopes of bringing my rebels under subjection.

"At three the masters arrive. They have music and dancing one day; German and drawing the next. As Mrs. Ainsworth chooses to be present at these lessons, I am emancipated, and I relieve my weary head by walking, reading, or writing to the dear friends from

whom I am separated. The masters leave at five. We then dress, to be ready for our summons to the dull drawing-room duties of the evening.

"It is one of Mrs. Ainsworth's rules, that no one is ever to be idle in her house. Now I have ever regarded the use of the needle as one of the heaviest inflictions entailed on our ill-used sex, and have never been able to overcome the difficulties of crochet and berlin work; and here I am compelled to toil at hems and seams the whole evening, till my fingers are sore and weary. Mrs. Ainsworth looks with contempt on my humble attempts. She soars in a higher range of art—the fashioning of garments. Emily and Annabella, under her superintendence, work at a large ottoman, and amuse themselves by pricking each other's fingers, and making grimaces when they think they are unobserved. Poor Herbert's fate is the most lamentable. He is compelled to knit stockings for the poor, and very poor they must be, if they consent to wear the shapeless monstrosity which he turns out. Mrs. Ainsworth believes that she thus fulfils the duties of a mother. The silence of the drawing-room is rarely broken, save by Mr. Ainsworth, who, in the intervals of his slumbers, tells some old story or newspaper anecdote, always deficient in interest and without vivacity or point.

"I at last relieve my wearied fingers by playing a duet with each of the girls, and conclude with some songs of the last century, to the order of Mr. Ainsworth. After all, he is a kind-hearted man, and Mrs. Ainsworth is true and just, and the world respects them.

‘In other men we faults can spy,’—you remember our good old Gay’s morality.

“Now comes Sunday, Minna. After our morning exercises, on this, my first Sunday at the Priory, the carriage bore us in gloomy state to church. The rector, a very old infirm man, was almost inaudible. A defect of this kind is no great impediment to your devotions during the prayers; but his sermon was unintelligible, and my attention began to relax. I confess to looking around me, and I was surprised and embarrassed by catching the eye of our old friend Harry Beverley, who was in a handsome pew, with the rest of his family. As we were leaving the church, he came to the carriage, before we drove off, and in his usual frank and pleasant manner begged me to wait and see his mother and sisters. I declined the honour. I candidly told him that I could not yet bear the interview. Laura Temple was not yet subdued to the governess-tone; and I feared that I might give offence on one side or another.

“He appeared hurt at my refusal, but soon resumed his gaiety. He shook hands with the whole party, who seemed to be old acquaintances, and assuring me that he should often call to see how I looked in my spectacles, he took leave. Mrs. Ainsworth informed me that the Beverleys lived in the Wolstan parish, and visited at the Priory. I fancy that Harry will not often venture into such an ungenial atmosphere. I explained to her my former intimacy with Harry, and expressed my desire to relinquish all intimacies which might interfere with the performance of my duties. She seemed somewhat

pleased with the sacrifice which I wished to make, and said, 'Quite right in principle, Miss Temple; but in the hours of recreation, you can, if you wish it, see your friends.'

"We went three times to church on this Sunday, and read many homilies at home; but I fear that in all this there was great coldness and little edification. I pined for the sweet, calm Sunday evenings at Seymour House, when we forgot the cares of life, the sin and misery of the world, as we traced the wanderings of the Son of God through the hallowed land of Galilee. Dear, dear Miss Aylmer!—How often I recall the soft music of her voice, as she poured on our charmed ears the gracious words, the tender mercies, the glorious promises of the Blessed One, until his presence seemed to sanctify the domestic hearth, and we retired with holy and happy thoughts to dream of a better world. Why is that charm wanting in this gloomy circle? I fear that the fault lies in the secret dominion of that pride of human nature, which is the root of all evil. Nay, I feel that my own solitary life encourages the growth of self-conceit. It is surely social intercourse that nurtures and expands our better feelings.

"Are you not weary of my uninteresting details, dear Minna? Another week has passed, and I scarcely see a shadow of improvement in my perverse pupils; but I am becoming more reconciled to my monotonous life. I have arranged a methodical and profitable employment of my few hours of leisure.

"Another Sunday is gone. Mrs. Ainsworth had

previously told me that a curate was engaged to assist the infirm rector, or rather to perform all his duties; but I was wholly unprepared to see Arthur Wilmot at the reading-desk. You, dear Minna, who know well his enthusiastic devotion, will readily believe that during the whole service he was too much absorbed in his duties to discover that I formed one of his congregation; but when Harry Beverley brought him to us, after the service, he welcomed me very warmly. Arthur was, as usual, embarrassed, and, when compared with his graceful and lively friend, he certainly appears to disadvantage. I saw that Arthur's melodious voice, his correct reading, and his forcible and eloquent sermon, had made but a slight impression on Mrs. Ainsworth; but I listened to him with astonishment. I confess that I wished Harry Beverley had been the preacher, rather than my awkward old friend '*Riquet*,'—do you remember, Minna, that I impertinently gave that name to good, plain Arthur? I do believe that my ugly prince, like the '*Riquet*' of the fairy tale, will in time appear handsome, especially in the church; but it will be long before he rivals my hero, Harry, in the drawing-room. Both the gentlemen are to dine at the Priory on Thursday. I shall not be honoured with an invitation; but I shall meet them in the evening. How effectually will the gloom of that temple of dulness, the drawing-room, be scattered, by the sprightliness of Harry Beverley and the sterling goodness of Arthur Wilmot."

CHAPTER X.

..... Warped into the labyrinth of lies.

COWPER.

LAURA toiled on in her difficult task till Thursday arrived, when the monotony of her existence was relieved by the visit of the dear friends of her childhood. She was so happy, while she sang and played for Harry and Arthur, that she almost forgot her dependent condition, and her heavy duties, and all Mrs. Ainsworth's stringent rules. For the first time since she had entered on her new vocation, she recovered her natural gaiety and brilliancy. Harry overflowed with vivacity and humour. Mr. Ainsworth heartily enjoyed a scene so new to his formal household; even Mrs. Ainsworth relaxed her usual stately reserve. The rank of the Honourable Harry Beverley purchased for him a dispensation from the observance of her almost immutable laws.

Laura now found that Harry Beverley, after taking a respectable degree, had quitted for ever the academic shades of Cambridge, and was residing at Beverley Abbey, enjoying the *dolce far niente* life, which is ever so dangerous to a young man. She looked on Arthur with increased respect, who was already labouring earnestly and successfully in a useful profession. The

little girls, who were delighted to escape from their irksome evening task, behaved wonderfully well, and danced and played their best. Even Herbert abated his wonted rudeness. He was proud of being noticed by Harry, who good-naturedly invited the boy to accompany him in his shooting expeditions, a request which Laura at once perceived Mrs. Ainsworth would not grant,—it was not in rule.

“And now, Laura,” said Harry Seymour, “I cannot go before you have sung my favourite, ‘Adelaida.’”

Laura had lent the book which contained the song to Mrs. Ainsworth, who graciously said, “Herbert will bring the book, Miss Temple. It is on the library-table.”

Herbert was silent and motionless.

“Herbert, do you hear me? Bring Miss Temple’s book,” said Mrs. Ainsworth again, but in vain. Her colour rose: she was accustomed to prompt obedience, even from her wayward children. She once more commanded him, in a peremptory tone, to execute the commission. His countenance grew more sullen and dogged. Mrs. Ainsworth, in great astonishment, turned to her daughters, and inquired the cause of his obstinate silence and disobedience.

They looked at each other, and at last Emily said, “He dare not go, mama, because the library is haunted.”

“Haunted!” cried Mrs. Ainsworth, forgetting in her anger all her stately decorum; “who has put such absurd nonsense into your heads?”

“It is not nonsense, indeed, mama,” said Annabella,

in tears. "Do, Herbert, tell mama about the ghost of the murdered man."

"I insist on your speaking, Herbert," said his mother; "tell me what you mean by 'the ghost.'"

"It is the ghost of grandpapa's brother, who was murdered in the library," said the boy, in a faint and faltering voice. "Grandfather locked up the room, and never dared to enter it while he lived. Every body knows about the ghost, that stands in the room every night, covered with blood."

"I insist on knowing immediately," said Mrs. Ainsworth, almost inarticulate from passion; "who told you this base falsehood. Speak at once, or I shall take you to the library, and shut you up there!"

The boy uttered a shriek, when he heard this harsh and injudicious threat, which made Arthur Wilmot start forward with a glance of indignation. Then, looking wildly at his sisters, the terrified child exclaimed, "Miss Temple told us the story, did she not, Emily?"

"Miss Temple," said Mrs. Ainsworth haughtily; "I intrusted my children to your care, in full confidence that your trials, and the experience of maturer years, had corrected the absurdly romantic spirit that rendered you so notorious in your early days."

Laura was speechless from astonishment; but Harry Beverley, laughing heartily at the ridiculous accusation, and at Mrs. Ainsworth's credulity, said:—

"Now, my dear Mrs. Ainsworth, you cannot really believe that Miss Temple would invent 'Rawhead and Bloody Bones' stories, for the sole purpose of terrifying

little children. What would Minna Seymour think, Laura, if she were to hear of your introducing the study of the 'Terrific Register' into your improved system of education?"

"Believe me, Mrs. Ainsworth," said Arthur Wilmot, with less calmness of manner than usual, "you are labouring under a serious misapprehension of the character of Miss Temple. She is incapable of so basely betraying the confidence reposed in her, as to infuse into the minds of her pupils such vulgar errors. I was an acquaintance of Miss Temple's from her childhood, and can bear witness, that though her early education encouraged the imaginative rather than the reasoning faculties, and produced a tendency to form exaggerated notions of common things, yet experience and reflection have entirely corrected the defect; but she has always been far above the falsehood and cruelty of which she is so strangely accused."

Laura, touched by his kind intercession, burst into tears, and extending her hand to Arthur, said, "I thank you sincerely, Mr. Wilmot. You, at least, know me. In conversing with your children, Mrs. Ainsworth, I have ever had before me but one object, their instruction and their improvement in morals and religion. My success, it would seem, has not been great. Who has filled their minds with these weak terrors, I cannot say. Herbert, I beg you will tell me from whom you learned these wicked stories, and what has tempted you to utter such a falsehood."

Herbert was sullenly silent. Mrs. Ainsworth said

haughtily, "I wish to examine into the affair myself, Miss Temple. To-morrow morning the matter shall be strictly and impartially investigated."

"And pray, Mrs. Ainsworth," said Harry Beverley, "allow us to be in court during the trial. Laura, take my advice, and retain me as counsel for the defence. You shall see how I will cross-examine witnesses, and bring out facts. As for Arthur, he is so grave and judicious, that he ought to be named as judge. Then, for the jury,"—

"We shall need neither counsel nor jury," said Mrs. Ainsworth hastily, and evidently annoyed. "In this unhappy matter I alone, Mr. Beverley, must be the judge. Retire, children. I shall see you early to-morrow. I request that no further allusion may be made to this matter."

"But allow me, Mrs. Ainsworth," said Laura, in deep distress, "do allow me to ask one question."

"Of course, Miss Temple, as many questions as you please," said Mr. Ainsworth. "And this," added he, turning to his lady, "is quite legal, my dear. The accused is always allowed, during his examination, to put questions to the witnesses against him. It is the law."

Mrs. Ainsworth was evidently annoyed; but, too proud and too discreet to contradict her husband in the presence of others, she was silent. Laura, in great agitation, addressed the boy.

"Herbert, you know that you have said what is not true. Have I ever told you a ghost-story?"

Herbert was silent for a time; but finding that he should be compelled to answer, he said hastily, "Oh, you told us ghost-stories very often,—did she not, Emily?"

"But when did you hear the story of the ghost in the library?" demanded Laura.

"On Sunday night," said Emily hurriedly; "and we sat up very late, for we were afraid of going to bed."

"Yes," added Herbert, "it was after prayers last Sunday evening, that you told us the whole story."

Laura looked at Mrs. Ainsworth, who turned very pale, and asked Herbert, if he was sure that it was after prayers.

"Yes, mama," said he, "Miss Temple sat with us in the school-room till the clock struck ten, and some jolly good stories she told us. Capital, were they not, Emily?"

"Yes, indeed it is true, mama," said Emily, "and Annabella cried very much."

Mrs. Ainsworth was very much agitated. She paused a few moments, and then ordered the children to go to the nursery. They seemed glad to escape, and as Herbert shook hands with Harry Beverley, he pointed with a vulgar grimace at Laura, and said in a low tone, "I have done the governess, and the governor too."

When the children were gone, Laura, turning to their mother, said, "I was reading with you on Sunday evening, Mrs. Ainsworth, from eight o'clock, when we had prayers, till nearly eleven. Am I not exculpated?"

Mrs. Ainsworth was silent. Arthur Wilmot then

ventured to say, "In justice to Miss Temple, speak Mrs. Ainsworth. Is this the fact?"

"Mr. Wilmot," replied she, "permit me for the present to waive the subject. Miss Temple may rely on having strict justice; but as the integrity of my child is in question, I must take time for further consideration and inquiry. I will not decide rashly on the matter."

It was impossible to urge the inquiry further; and the harmony of the evening being completely disturbed, the gentlemen took leave, with marked respect to Laura. The young governess sought her chamber in great distress of mind. Her experiment in education, she could not but think, was eminently unsuccessful. She grieved to think how much labour she had expended in vain. After meditating some time on the strange falsehood invented by the children, she at last determined to go to the bed-room of the little girls, and endeavour to induce them, by serious remonstrances, to reveal the truth.

Laura gently opened the door of their bed-chamber, and found Annabella in bed, and weeping bitterly.

"Where is your sister, my dear child!" said Laura, "and what is the cause of your tears?"

"I must not tell you," sobbed the child.

"But you must tell me, Annabella," said Laura, in a determined tone, "or I must bring your mama."

"Oh, pray don't bring mama, Miss Temple, and I will tell you!" said the child. "They are both gone with Susan, and they have left me alone, for Herbert calls me a *sneak*, and says I shall *peach*. And I have not

to peach, Miss Temple;—that means, I must not tell you about the suppers and all that.”

“My dear child,” said Laura, “it is your duty to tell me where these suppers are. Fear no one; for you do quite right when you speak the truth honestly. God abhors and punishes falsehood. Tell me the whole truth, and then you will feel much happier.”

Annabella sobbed a little while, and then said,—“Susan often takes us to the laundry, when you think that we are in bed, and there we have such fun. Emily and I dance polkas, and John plays on the fiddle. Then, Herbert stands on the table and sings such jolly songs that John teaches him; and they all laugh, Herbert sings them so well. After that we have plenty of good things for supper; but we are to have no more if we tell any body. Herbert told a lie, Miss Temple. It was old Betty, the laundry-maid, who told us the stories about ghosts, on Sunday. We durst not speak the truth, for fear that Betty should be angry. Oh, how frightened I have been since they left me here! I thought the ghost would come, because I had been so wicked, and when you opened the door, I thought it was coming to tear me in pieces.”

Laura endeavoured to calm the child's agitation, not a little increased by her dread of the vengeance of Susan, one of the housemaids, who, she said, had urged the children to do all they could to “spite their proud governess.”

Laura then summoned the nurse, who was astonished and distressed when she learned the secret frolics of the

children. In answer to Laura's inquiries, she described Susan as an artful girl, who had gained the favour of Mrs. Ainsworth by her fawning and specious manner. "The maids," she said, "were expected to get through a great deal of needlework, and they usually sat together in the laundry, to sew in the evening." Further she could give no information.

Laura at once proceeded to Mrs. Ainsworth's dressing-room, and found her still undressed. With feeling and delicacy she communicated her discovery to the mother of the offenders, and was somewhat alarmed to see the effect of the intelligence. Mrs. Ainsworth, pale and speechless, wrapped a cloak around her, took up a candle, and holding fast by Laura's arm, moved with trembling steps towards the laundry. This office stood at some little distance from the house, from which it was separated by a shrubbery. As they entered the lower room of the laundry, it became at once very clear that a noisy party was assembled in the upper apartments. Softly ascending the stairs, Mrs. Ainsworth and Laura opened a door, and stood gazing with astonishment on the tumult. Five or six of the maid-servants were the ladies of the party. The grooms and the coachman were enjoying their pipes, and a capacious jug of ale. Herbert was singing some low slang song, received with riotous applause by the audience; while Emily, seated at a table strewn with the remains of the supper, was quietly devouring a plate of sweetmeats.

In the confusion of sounds, for every one was singing, laughing, or talking, some moments passed before the

presence of the unexpected intruders was perceived; but as soon as they were seen, a dead silence took place. Mrs. Ainsworth advanced, took her two children by the hand, and led them out of the room, without uttering a word to the paralysed domestics. Emily began to whimper, muttering that it was Herbert's fault; but her mother peremptorily ordered her to be silent.

Herbert, whom Mrs. Ainsworth had consigned to Laura's custody, was inclined to be refractory, and tried to make his escape. In spite of his struggles, he was taken to his own room and locked up. Mrs. Ainsworth now seemed overcome by her suppressed emotions. She put Emily into Laura's hands without uttering a word, refused by a gesture every offer of assistance, and walked with tottering steps to her apartment.

Emily, weeping bitterly and making innumerable excuses, was conducted to the nursery, where her timid sister had been left under the care of the nurse. Laura commanded her to restrain her tears, and to kneel down and pray that God would forgive her the sins of falsehood and disobedience which she had committed. After explaining to the children briefly and simply the enormity of their faults, Laura shewed the path of repentance and amendment which lay open to them. Softened and penitent, the little girls promised to speak the truth, and to be obedient and docile for the future. They besought Laura to intercede with their mama for forgiveness, which she promised to do, and after tenderly kissing them, she bade them good-night with a lightened heart.

The chilling presence of Mrs. Ainsworth failed to check the good effects of Arthur's gracious admonitions. Though pride choked the good seed in her own heart, she permitted her children to receive it with a happier result. Even Laura, with her delicate perception of the beautiful, forgot Arthur's homely features, and inelegant deportment, when she listened with a charmed ear, to his gentle and persuasive eloquence, which, 'allured to brighter worlds, and led the way.'

Herbert had now been three months at school, and during that period Laura, by perseverance and firmness, had wrought a change in her neglected pupils. They had not only made some progress in their studies, but were gradually becoming more amiable, affectionate, and dutiful. Though their mother did not condescend to express her satisfaction, she refrained from interference, and was scrupulously polite to Laura. The young governess's dull life was from time to time enlivened by a visit from the Seymours, or her aunt, and by letters from her father of a satisfactory nature.

One morning, as Laura and the children were sitting at breakfast in the school-room, near an open window, overshadowed by the branches of a tall lime, they were startled by a rustling among the leaves, and suddenly, to their great surprise, Herbert leaped from the tree into the room.

His sisters received him with great joy; but Laura, discomposed by his irregular mode of entering the room, questioned him as to the cause of his leaving school.

"Because," said he, "there's no standing the tyranny

of that old villainous Dr. Digby. I have been flogged at least twice a week ever since I went. It was terrible, girls, the first time. I thought they were going to murder me, and I thirsted for the blood of the old savage. I wrote to tell mama, and got my letter sent off secretly; but I believe she sent the letter back to the doctor, for three days after I sent it, the doctor had me up, abused me for writing letters, and I was flogged again. Since that time I have been watched and treated so like a slave, that I hate both books, and school, and masters too.

"Yesterday, when I found it was no good trying to do my best, I stood out, and refused to do my task, so I was ordered off this morning to the punishment-room, to be lashed.

"Two of the big lads, who don't care for old Digby, were going to cut off this morning to N—— races, so they took pity on me, and offered to get me out, if I would run away. I was very glad of the chance, and should have liked to have a lark with them; but I had not the means, I am kept so tight for cash. So here I am. I thought that if I stole in here, I might get to see papa first, and tell him how I have been used; and then, I think, he will not send me back; indeed, they must carry me by force if they will send me back, for I will die rather than stay in that tiger's den."

The girls wept bitterly as they listened to the narrative of their brother's sufferings, and Laura lamented such ill-judged severity, so little calculated to reform a neglected and stubborn boy. She gave him some

breakfast, and tried to soothe his irritated feelings. He wished to go immediately to his father; but, unfortunately, Mr. Ainsworth was laid up with a periodical attack of gout, and while he was suffering under the irritation of that disease, his children were not permitted to approach him. Laura was still weighing the various difficulties of the case, when Mrs. Ainsworth entered the room, and, starting at the sight of her son, she demanded why she saw him there.

The boy's bravery was dissipated before his mother's stern countenance, he burst into tears and was unable to speak. It was from Laura that Mrs. Ainsworth heard the story of his disgraces and sufferings.

"Pray, dear mama," cried he at length, "pray send me no more to that wicked man. I will learn with Miss Temple, I will go to any school; but I cannot endure such punishments."

"You should not deserve punishment," said his mother, apparently quite unmoved. "Dr. Digby is highly respected, and I therefore selected his school for you. You must return immediately. You know I never alter my resolutions."

Herbert uttered a shriek of despair, when he heard his sentence. The girls clung to their mother, with tears and piteous entreaties, interceding for their brother. Laura saw Mrs. Ainsworth's lip quiver, and her colour change. She, however, left the room, without speaking.

The children looked at each other in great distress, for they knew Mrs. Ainsworth too well to hope for a

remission of the sentence. An appeal to their father was now useless. Herbert then, in his rude and violent manner, gave to Laura the painful details of his faults and his punishments. The faults were chiefly offences of disobedience and ignorance. The punishments, she at once perceived, were excessive, and calculated rather to confirm than remove the defects of Herbert's character. She tried to persuade him that a submissive behaviour, and strict attention to study, would soften the rigour of the doctor's discipline.

"You don't know him," cried Herbert passionately; "he hates me. He knows he can ill-treat me, because I am a little boy. He dare not flog the big lads, for they 'jaw' him, and let him know that if he were to meddle with them, they would serve him out in the same way. For his life, cowardly knave as he is, he dare not touch them! And Miss Temple, and you, girls, hear what I say:—He shall never flog me again,—that I've made up my mind to!"

Laura endeavoured to calm his impetuous passion; but her own sorrow and indignation unfitted her for calm reasoning. Convinced of the impolicy of this debasing system of treatment, she longed to see Mr. Ainsworth, and plead the cause of the ill-used boy. To Mrs. Ainsworth all further appeal was useless; she was too proud to relent. The girls sat down to their lessons, as the law commanded, but tears and lamentations rendered any profitable study impossible.

After a miserable hour of suspense, Mr. Layton, the butler, entered to announce that the carriage was waiting

at the door to convey Master Herbert back to Dr. Digby's. Herbert turned very pale, and asked whether he might not be allowed to see his papa before he went.

"He does not know that you are here, Master Herbert," said Layton; "and we are ordered not to tell him, for fear of driving the gout to his stomach, which might be his death. You had better come with me; my mistress will blame me, if the carriage is kept waiting. She has given me a letter for Dr. Digby, and I have no doubt that he will forgive you this time."

"He will flog me till I drop," said Herbert, "if he gets me again into his power. You surely will not give me up to him, Layton?"

Layton was agitated, and evidently reluctant to perform his office; but to the servants, as well as to the children, Mrs. Ainsworth's orders were immutable laws.

The girls clung weeping to their brother, and Laura could not help sharing their sorrow. They pressed their little purses into the hand of the almost stupefied boy. He stood some time without speaking; then, with a sullen, dogged air of resolution, he followed Layton to the carriage.

CHAPTER XI.

You are staunch indeed in Learning's cause,
If you can crown a discipline that draws
Such mischiefs after it, with much applause.

COWPER

THE lessons of that melancholy morning were so irksome, that even the dull walk at twelve was a relief. They exchanged their school-room, now full of painful associations, for green trees and sparkling wild-flowers, while the fresh air cooled their flushed faces and inflamed eyes; though, when they talked of their poor brother's further trials, Laura had much difficulty in preventing a renewal of their tears.

Mrs. Ainsworth joined them on their way to the village, and Laura saw, not without astonishment, that her manner was as calm and composed as usual. The little girls were compelled to controul their grief, for they knew that their mama would not permit any allusion to the unhappy events of the morning. She did not mention the matter herself, and Laura was gladly silent, as she was certain that all interference would be unavailing.

When Layton returned in the evening, Laura learned from the nurse, that the butler had consigned his reluctant

charge to the custody of Dr. Digby; that the Doctor had ordered him to be locked up till the next day, when he was to be publicly tried for his offence against the discipline of the school.

The next day Laura and her pupils were sad and abstracted, for their thoughts constantly recurred to poor Herbert's humiliating trial before a tribunal for which he had no respect. As they were returning with Mrs. Ainsworth from their morning walk, they saw a carriage standing at the door of the hall, and Mr. Layton coming to meet them, evidently in some agitation. He announced that a gentleman was waiting in the library to speak to Mrs. Ainsworth.

She hastily passed on, and Laura could not forbear from asking Layton if any thing unpleasant had happened.

"Oh, Madam!" said he; "Master Herbert has run away again, and this time they have not been able to trace him. An elder boy has gone with him, who had just received some money from his friends. Indeed, to tell the truth, Miss, Master Herbert asked me, as we were going to the school yesterday, to lend him a little cash to help him through his troubles. I could not bear that my master's son should be so badly off, so I gave him two sovereigns which I happened to have in my pocket, and I little thought what use he would put them to.

"Well, Miss, you know what a grand climber Master Herbert was. Now his window happened to be close to the end of the house, so he got out and came down

by the corner-stones, and an awful feat it must have been, as the gentleman says. The other boy, whom nobody suspected, got out of the house without any trouble. The gentleman who has come over is one of the masters, but he teaches the big boys and knows very little about my young master. He told me the whole story while he was waiting to see my mistress. And indeed, ladies, he thinks the boys not so much to blame, for the Doctor would ruin any lad with such harsh ways. I wish he may get my mistress to his mind, that she may take Master Herbert from the school, if we only find him. But Mr. Willis, for that is his name, ladies, says that they have made inquiries on all sides, and can hear nothing of the boys. For my part, I should have thought that they had made away with themselves, if they had not each carried off a bundle of clothes, which looks as if they meant better."

Laura shuddered at this conjecture of the attached old servant. She retired with the girls, who were pleased and relieved by the news of Herbert's escape.

"Do you know, Miss Temple," said Emily, "I have been considering that if we could get Herbert into the house secretly, we could hide him in the lumber-room over the nursery. We would carry him some of our food every day, and you could teach him to be good and well-behaved, and he would have no need of going to school."

Laura smiled as she remembered the romantic fancies of her own childhood, and hastened to shew to her

little pupil the impracticability of the scheme, and the sinfulness of all deceit, even when the motive of it was good.

Mrs. Ainsworth disdained to seek sympathy and relief by communicating her anxieties to a friend. As the unhappy event was concealed from Mr. Ainsworth, whose state required perfect tranquillity, his wife of necessity took the responsibility of acting. Messengers and letters were despatched in every direction; and every face was clouded with anxiety; yet when the family met in the drawing-room at night, all was expected to go on as if nothing extraordinary had happened.

The attempt was not successful. Emily made numerous blunders in playing her new overture. Annabella broke the thread of her crochet incessantly, and spoilt her work with the tears that fell as she stooped over it. Laura found, when she attempted her usual songs, that her voice had lost its firmness, and she fancied that Mrs. Ainsworth's knitting proceeded with less than its wonted rapidity. The conversation, never lively, was now unusually constrained and languid. Mrs. Ainsworth talked of literary works, of music, of their poor pensioners; but the subject that filled every one's thoughts was evidently a forbidden topic. The children were glad to retire, and to pour out to Laura their mingled feelings of joy and terror as they discussed the uncertain fate of their wandering brother.

Ten anxious and melancholy days passed, but no tidings of the truant arrived. As Laura was one day

on her road to the cottage of some sick man, unaccompanied by the children, she met Arthur Wilmot, and felt some relief in communicating the affair to him. He expressed some surprise that Mrs. Ainsworth had not at once, as Mr. Ainsworth was disabled by his infirmities, confided in Lord Beverley, who would willingly have aided her researches by his official influence; but, in fact, the proud reserve of the lady's character rendered all prompt and efficient measures impossible, for she could not bend to ask the help of others.

Arthur promised to see Lord Beverley immediately, not doubting that when that nobleman knew Mrs. Ainsworth's distress, he would call and offer his services. Laura returned home with a heart relieved of a portion of its cares, and found that a letter had arrived for her, addressed in the hand-writing of Herbert. Eagerly opening it, she read the following characteristic epistle.

"DEAR MISS TEMPLE,—It was all nonsense. I was not going to stand being tried and flayed, so I cut and ran. I enclose a letter for Emmy in yours, that she may be sure to get it. If I had directed it to her it would have been cribbed. I don't intend to go to school again. Tell my mother, that I am not afraid of getting on without Latin and Greek, especially as Dr. Digby teaches it.

"You were always kind to me, Miss Temple, and I like you. Farewell. It will be a long time before you see me at the Priory.

"HERBERT AINSWORTH."

Laura, though thankful to learn the boy's safety, was shocked at the levity with which he spoke of his disobedience. She proceeded, as she conceived it was her duty to do, to Mrs. Ainsworth, and put both the letters into her hands. The mother glanced over her son's letter, and merely said, "You have done well;" her voice betraying suppressed emotion.

She then with trembling hands opened the letter to Emily. After perusing it, she gave the letter to Laura, saying:—

"I can trust you, Miss Temple. Read this, and communicate to my children as much of it as it is proper that they should know."

Laura profited by the permission, and read Herbert's ill-written letter to his sister:—

"Huzza, girls! I have contrived to get off from the old tyrant in spite of all his care. I had a friend who knew what I was to get the next morning, so he stole to the door of my room, and told me all through the keyhole. We formed our plot, for he was as tired of his life as I was. He got out of the house very easily, after the servants were gone to bed, by unbarring the hall-door. He then came round under my window, and I threw down my bundle to him. I then made a scramble for it, and got down by clinging to the corner-stones. He found a ladder, and raised it, but it was not half long enough. However, I was right glad when I came to it, for my hands were bleeding, and my clothes

soon as I was down, we cut off through the fields

till we came to a thick wood, and there we stopped to disguise ourselves. We had plenty of time for that, for it was only about midnight, and we knew we should not be missed before seven in the morning.

"It was a bright moonlight night, so we managed very well. We tore our clothes to rags, pulled the crowns out of our hats, cut holes in our shoes, and then daubed each other's faces with mud. We had a good laugh, when we found that we made two such capital beggar boys.

"Farley knew the way to Liverpool, so we made up our minds to beg our way there, when we had eaten up all our grub, for we had carried a lot away with us. When we got near a town or village, we took off our shoes and stockings, and passed through it at different times, and nobody ever took any notice of us. At night, we slept under haystacks, and very cold and uncomfortable it was, but not so bad as one's own bed, when one looks out for a flogging next morning.

"It took us six days to reach Liverpool. There I was delighted to see the ships lying in the river, for I thought that if I could but get on board some vessel I should be safe. I wandered about the docks, watching the crowd of sailors, all busy, while Farley went into the town to get us something to eat, and inquire how we could obtain places in some ship just going to sail. He had not left the docks two minutes, when he unluckily met an uncle of his that lives in Liverpool, and is his guardian too. This was a pretty go! But Farley behaved like a brick, and didn't peach. He told his uncle

how Digby had treated him, and showed the bruises and cuts on his shoulders, so the old boy let him off easily, and told him he had done quite right, and that he should go no more to that Turk, Digby, but to a day school in the town. He then set to work to make up a story about me. Miss Temple would call it a lie, but for all that Farley's a good fellow. He said that he had brought a poor lad with him, who had been cruelly treated by his stepmother. That was not very far from the truth, you know, Emmy. He then begged of his uncle to get the poor fellow employment as a cabin-boy in some ship that was to sail directly, for fear his hard-hearted relations should make him out, and force him, as they intended, to become a chimney-sweep.

"Was it not a capital story? His uncle was so mossy as to believe every word, and spoke about me to a captain whom he knew, and who was going to sail the next morning for — I won't tell you where, for fear my letter should fall into the governor's hands.

"I thought Farley would never return to me; but when he came back he told me all this, and the good news, besides, that the captain had agreed to take me. Farley had changed my name to —, but that's another secret. Is not all this fine fun, girls?

"After I had put on a better jacket that I had brought with me, we set off at once, and here I am on board. The sailors appear rude and boisterous, but I suppose I shall soon become used to them. Farley spoke to a man that he knew, a sort of clerk, who has let me write this letter in a queer little box, that he

calls his berth. Farley is waiting to take my letter on shore. He will put it into the post after our ship has fairly sailed, and I am out of the reach of the tyrants who have forced me to be a vagabond.

"Be good girls, and do what Miss Temple bids you, but never yield to be sent to school. Mama was very hard upon me, but if she lets me alone now, I'll forgive her. But, for the Doctor, I hope to get a good cut at him some day, and won't I let him feel what a flogging is ?

"Tell Layton I will pay him his two guineas when I get my first prize-money. Farley got one of them changed for me, so I am well off for tin.

"What a long letter I have written, and how soft I feel when I think of you, girls, for nobody else cares for me, except poor papa, and he is only a spoony, or he would have more of his own way.

"When you say your prayers, you may as well put in a word for your brother 'upon the stormy water.'

"Farewell, all.

"HERBERT."

Laura read this rude scrawl, not without emotions of pity for the victim of a faulty system of education. Though shocked at the story of falsehood and error which the letter revealed, she was still hopeful of the boy's reformation under judicious treatment.

"Surely, Mrs. Ainsworth," cried she, "you will not send him again to Dr. Digby, who certainly does not understand his character. There is a fund of good in

Herbert, I know, which careful cultivation would develop."

"All the advantages and disadvantages of Dr. Digby's system," answered Mrs. Ainsworth, "were carefully weighed, before I committed my son to his care. I shall take immediate steps to arrest the flight of the disobedient boy, for the ship may not yet have sailed, and if he be recovered, he shall certainly be made to return to school. His obstinacy must be overcome. Let my daughters know my determination, and tell them that during our drive this afternoon, I wish no allusion to be made to this painful subject."

Laura sighed as she left the unhappy mother, who thus relying on her own strength, rejected the aid which God offers to the humble and broken spirit. She communicated to her pupils so much of their brother's letter as it was prudent to communicate, and reluctantly made known to them Mrs. Ainsworth's intention, in the event of his return.

"Then I hope he may escape to India or America," said Emily, "and live there for years till he is a man and cannot be sent to school. I would rather we should not see him for all that time, than know that he was unhappy at that place which he dislikes so much. And I think, besides, that mama should have given me his letter; she had no right to keep it, Miss Temple."

"God has given to parents the right to govern their children," said Laura, "when they are of such tender years as you. As they govern them well or ill, they must answer to God, but not to the children. The law

of obedience is the necessary discipline of life. All obey:—children obey their parents, servants their masters, subjects their rulers, and all are equally bound to obey God. Submission is especially a woman's duty, Emily."

"But it is very hard to submit always," said Emily. "Once I could not submit at all, but I try to be better now. But do you think they will catch poor Herbert, Miss Temple?"

"I think not," said Laura. "As young Farley promised to detain Herbert's letter till his ship had sailed, the vessel is now probably beyond the reach of his pursuers. It is true that contrary winds might detain outward-bound ships;—but we shall learn all in a few days. And, my dear children, if Herbert should succeed in escaping, he will have to endure in his new course of life hardships greater far than he ever contemplated. He will however have, I hope, time for reflection, and he may then remember that he was bound by the law of God to obey his parents, however painful the task might be. He has broken that law, and ought to pray for forgiveness; and we will pray for him too, as he desires."

"I would not even try," exclaimed Annabella, "to obey a cruel and unjust person, as Emily says that she does. I am sure I never could be obedient to a tyrant."

"But it is not for you to judge those whom you are bound to obey," said Laura. "You must do your duty even if they be unkind and unworthy."

"What a hard thing it is to be very good," said the little girl with a sigh.

Laura explained to her, that it was indeed impossible to be perfectly good; but that our efforts to be so were accepted by God, if we faithfully relied on his mercy and truth.

CHAPTER XII.

—Wisdom at one entrance quite shut out,
So much the rather thou, celestial light,
Shine inwards, and the mind, through all her powers
Irradiate; there plant eyes, all mist from thence
Purge and disperse.

MILTON.

ONE hour at Wolstan was always dull. Day after day Mrs Ainsworth, with Laura and the girls, took the same drive in the open carriage on the same dusty high-road; and, on this day, the murky clouds, the sultry atmosphere, and their own heavy laden hearts, made it more than usually oppressive. They had not proceeded far when a loud clap of thunder startled the horses and alarmed the children. The clouds, now gathered in huge dark masses, shut out the light of day, and indicated the coming storm. The coachman ventured to turn round, and ask whether he should not turn back, as he feared there was some "sad weather coming on."

"We will take our usual round," said Mrs. Ainsworth, in a tone more than commonly imperious, as if the wind and the tempest would obey her. Laura felt that such was its signification, and trembled as she breathed a prayer for them all.

A solemn stillness reigned in the sombre atmosphere ; even the busy sparrows stayed their clamorous chirping, and the cattle, grouped together, stood trembling in the corners of the fields. Nothing seemed to have life or motion, but the leaves, which fluttered as if moved by some imperceptible breeze. The blue lightning darted across the heavens, succeeded rapidly by loud peals of thunder, and the terrified horses suddenly stopped and stood quivering in every limb.

Laura besought Mrs. Ainsworth to return or to alight, but she commanded the coachman to drive on. He tried in vain to induce his horses to move, and was vigorously applying his whip, when a flash of lightning instantaneously succeeded by a clap of thunder loud as the report of a battery of artillery, roused them to a kind of frenzy. The terrified animals rushed forward with such sudden impetuosity that the coachman was thrown from his seat, and then galloped madly on free from any control.

The carriage was fortunately a low backed phaeton, and Laura promptly determined to take advantage of its peculiar form. She lowered the girls, one after the other, from the back of the vehicle, and then, finding Mrs. Ainsworth resolved not to move, she followed the children, falling, as they had done, with some violence on her face, but escaping with a few bruises.

Laura's first care, as soon as she recovered her feet, was to run to Mrs. Wilmot's cottage, which was close at hand, to procure assistance ; but before she reached the house another vivid flash again startled the horses,

and, backing rapidly, they overturned the phaeton on a heap of stones.

The cries of the children drew Mrs. Wilmot and her son from the house, followed by the gardener, who resided with them. The traces were immediately cut and the horses released. On raising the carriage, they found the senseless form of Mrs. Ainsworth. Her face was severely cut and covered with blood, but what further injury she had sustained they could not discover. She was carefully borne to Mrs. Wilmot's cottage, laid on a bed, and such restoratives used as they dared to apply before the arrival of the surgeon, who had been immediately sent for.

As soon as Mr. Henley arrived he made the necessary examinations, and pronounced that both Mrs. Ainsworth's arms were broken, and that there were symptoms of concussion of the brain. Arthur without delay rode up to the Priory, and communicated the painful tidings to Mr. Ainsworth, who on that day had left his room for the first time after a tedious attack of gout. In great distress he ordered his horse, and mounting with great difficulty set off with Arthur Wilmot for the village.

When Mr. Ainsworth and Arthur entered the room where Mrs. Ainsworth was lying they found her still in a state of insensibility. The children were standing weeping near the bed, while Laura, very pale, but intelligent and active, with the quiet, gentle Mrs. Wilmot, were assisting the surgeon, who was bandaging the fractured limbs.

Mr. Ainsworth was greatly affected at the scene; but unaccustomed to the exercise of any mental energy, he looked with astonishment on the promptness and activity of the assistants, while she who usually controlled and directed every one, lay powerless and helpless. At last he spoke. Looking round at the simple little uncarpeted chamber, with white dimity curtains and deal table, he said, "I must send for the carriage, Mr. Wilmot. We must manage to remove Mrs. Ainsworth before she recovers her senses. She would be quite uncomfortable and strange here. She is very particular, you know, my dears," appealing to the children.

"If you move my patient from this house," said the blunt old surgeon, "you had better provide a hearse at once, for she will be a corpse before you get her to the Priory."

Mr. Ainsworth was silenced, but it was evident that he was in dread of the offence which the dignity of his imperious wife would sustain, when she discovered the humble accommodations that surrounded her.

"Do not waste a thought about the appearance of the room," said Laura; "we will arrange every thing so as to please Mrs. Ainsworth, if by the blessing of God she be restored to consciousness."

"I leave it all to Mrs. Wilmot and you, my dear Miss Temple," said he, somewhat relieved, "only remember it was my wish that she should be removed to her own apartment. And now, Miss Temple, what must I do next?"

"You must return to the Priory, Mr. Ainsworth,"

replied Laura, "and take the children with you. I will stay and nurse Mrs. Ainsworth."

"Do let me stay," sobbed Emily, "I will be very quiet, and I am sure I can be useful. You know that I used to bathe Betty Norris's inflamed eyes every day, and she said that I did it better than the doctor."

Laura thought Emily old enough to profit by the sad scene, and with Mrs. Wilmot's consent, she was allowed to remain for at least one night. Annabella returned with her father, to be his companion and attendant. Mrs. Ainsworth's maid arrived in the evening with every necessary that her mistress might require; but as she was too fine a lady to be useful in Mrs. Wilmot's humble cottage, she was dismissed, and Laura took her place beside the bed of her unconscious charge.

Through the long and tedious night, the watchers looked anxiously for a change in Mrs. Ainsworth, but though she breathed, no other sign of life appeared. Laura gazed on the disfigured face and the motionless form stretched with bandaged arms on the bed, and thought that the sight was more terrible than death itself. Emily crept to Laura's side, and whispered, "Oh, Miss Temple, if God spares poor mama's life, don't you think that she will pardon Herbert?"

Laura started, for the echo of her own thoughts reached her ear. She felt that she too had been judging rashly of the sufferer, and she silently prayed that her presumption might be forgiven. She gently turned Emily's thoughts from the subject of her brother's

sufferings and flight, and induced her to join Mrs. Wilmot and herself in prayer to God for Mrs. Ainsworth's restoration. She then sent the wearied child to bed, and continued her dreary watch.

At daybreak, Arthur entered the room to inquire after the patient, and calmed and refreshed the exhausted watchers by reading the beautiful service for the sick, while they knelt, almost hopeless, by the bed of sickness.

About noon they perceived a slight quivering of the lips. Laura bent over the bed, and spoke to the sufferer. Mrs. Ainsworth at first gave no sign of having heard or understood what was said, but in a few minutes after she murmured, "My boy, my poor boy!"

How thankful was Laura to hear that faint, low voice. Still more thankful to distinguish words which shewed that a mother's feelings still existed under coldness of pride. After a pause, Mrs. Ainsworth whispered, "Where am I? Why can I not move?"

"You have been thrown out of the carriage answered Laura, and severely injured. Your arms are bandaged, and you must not attempt to move them. Your eyes are closed from the bruises you have received on your face. You have, I thank God, received no further injury, and I trust that by his mercy you will soon be restored. You are in Mrs. Wilmot's house, and she is your attentive nurse. Now, Mrs. Ainsworth, I have told you all, and you must not speak till Mr. Henley calls to see you."

The patient was for once obedient. She lay still

and silent, but apparently conscious of her situation. Mr. Henley, who had been made aware of the favourable change, soon appeared. After having administered some restoratives, and dressed her mangled face, he allowed her to speak and to take some refreshment. He appeared much alarmed at the violent inflammation which had commenced. He shook his head as he pointed it out to Laura, and ordered continual cooling applications.

Laura, now, at the sufferer's request, described the frightful accident. Mrs. Ainsworth was for some time thoughtful and silent. She then spoke kindly to Emily, and enjoined her to be good, and to obey Miss Temple.

"Are we alone, Miss Temple," said Mrs. Ainsworth, after a while.

Mrs. Wilmot retired immediately, with Emily, and Mrs. Ainsworth, when she was assured that she was alone with Laura, said, "It is now I fear too late to save my son; but will you, Miss Temple, do all that is in your power to do? I entrust all to your activity and prudence. His father must now learn all."

"Mr. Wilmot will, I am sure," said Laura, "communicate the whole to Mr. Ainsworth, and, with your sanction, to Lord Beverley also. His lordship will see at once what measures are to be taken, and he has besides great influence in the foreign department of the government. All shall be attended to. Be composed, Mrs. Ainsworth,—I will set about it at once."

Mrs. Ainsworth seemed inclined to object to a plan

which did not emanate from herself, but feeling too weak to make objections, she submitted with a sigh.

Laura then sought out Arthur Wilmot, and revealed to him the whole story of Herbert's delinquency. Though he feared that it was now too late to arrest the flight of the truant, Mr Wilmot hastened to solicit the help of Lord Beverley. The kind-hearted nobleman at once took the necessary steps, first, to make out what ship the fugitive had sailed in, and, if possible, restore him to his family; or if the ship could not be overtaken, to secure proper treatment for the boy when the vessel reached its destination.

Arthur left Beverley Abbey with a lightened heart and proceeded to the Priory, where he found its owner looking very miserable, for he had sacrificed to decorum his morning ride, and had been called on to order his own dinner. He would have gladly heard Annabella play and sing, had not this been considered an impropriety. What he called distress about the sufferings of his wife was in truth the discomfort caused by the disturbance of his selfish ease and his petty enjoyments.

The favourable account of Mrs. Ainsworth had, however, a somewhat cheering effect on her husband, and enabled him to bear with firmness the tale which now reached his ear for the first time,—the tale of Herbert's misery at school, his rebellion, and his flight. Selfish as he was, he was affected to tears as he listened to the story of cruelty,—nay, he boldly declared, that however Mrs. Ainsworth might dictate, his boy should never return to “that scoundrel Digby.”

"He was getting on, Mr. Wilmot," added he, "as well as any parent could desire with Miss Temple. He could go through *Musa* without a mistake; and two more declensions,—I forget the words,—better than I could when I had been six months at Eton. I never could bear the Latin grammar myself, and of what use it can be to him, I cannot see. Only think, Mr. Wilmot, of that fellow flogging a fine lad about nothing but his Latin grammar. I have no patience with the Doctor, and I believe that I could indict him for it. I saw a case in the *Times* the other day,—to be sure, it was not quite the same,—but I know that the fellow was sent to prison. I copied the case into my scrap-book. Now, Mr. Wilmot, do get Mrs. Ainsworth to let the poor lad come back and study under Miss Temple;—but what am I talking about? He will probably never come back,—and look at that! We have no other son, and this fine estate must go to a stranger. What can be done, Mr. Wilmot? I can do nothing. How should I in this great distress?"

Arthur entreated him to be calm, and described the measures that he had taken. Mr. Ainsworth seemed astonished at the judgment and energy displayed in the matter; but declared that he should have taken the very same steps, but for his "great distress."

He then accompanied Arthur to the village, and was admitted to a short interview with his wife, but at Laura's particular request, deferred the narrative of his troubles and annoyances, till Mrs. Ainsworth should be strong enough to listen to it.

The inflammation caused by the wounds in the sufferer's face terminated in violent erysipelas, and for many days her life was despaired of. For weeks she lay suffering from anguish of body and of mind. At last, that proud, self-relying woman rose from her humble bed, a dependant on the compassion or love of those around her;—feeble, helpless, disfigured, and incurably blind. But the light that fled from her eyes shone brightly on her hitherto darkened mind. In the long hours of her seclusion from the world, she had searched out her secret sins, and had found, amidst all her sufferings, a fountain of consolation in the abundant mercy of God.

Many an hour had Arthur Wilmot sat by the bed of trial, and declared to the restless sufferer the blessedness of that poverty of spirit, of which he, whose holy word inculcated the necessity, shewed us such a lovely example. How his little congregation hung on his words of peace! The children would remain subdued and thoughtful, and once Annabella whispered, "Dear mama, I will never again think it dull to take our walk along the same road every day. I will try to like it, because you order us to do it."

It was during these exhortations, that Laura often wondered that she had ever thought Arthur Wilmot plain and awkward, as she watched his countenance, lighted up with the grace and beauty of piety and benevolence.

Mrs. Ainsworth now gathered in the fruits of her afflictions. Now, in her humiliation, she was happier

than she had ever been in the days of her pride and power. Her children, who used to shrink from her in fear, now clung round her, eager to amuse or assist her. Mr. Ainsworth, who had been roused to unwonted exertions, ventured to hint to his lady some improvements in his house and grounds which he had projected, and was surprised and delighted to hear his plans approved and sanctioned. There were, indeed, moments, in which the habitual love of dominion struggled to regain its mastery; but the better spirit fought and conquered.

It was a day of mingled sorrow and joy, when Mrs. Ainsworth took leave of the quiet home of Mrs. Wilmot, to return to her splendid apartments at the Priory—to her, alas! splendid in vain. She embraced Mrs. Wilmot, and besought her kind hostess to spend the remainder of her life at the Priory. “My home is large enough,” said Mrs. Ainsworth; “come, my best friends, and choose your apartments. Your lives may be as tranquil there as in this abode of peace; for I am now unfit for the society of visitors. Be my guides and directors, ever ready to warn me, if I stray from the path into which you have led me.”

“The strength of mind which God gave you,” answered Mrs. Wilmot, “when it pleased him to weaken your bodily powers, will, by his aid, which I know you will seek, keep you in the path which leads to him. My son is labouring in a wide field of imperative duties, and I must not leave him; but we shall visit you daily, and pray for you hourly.”

Mrs. Ainsworth urged Arthur to endeavour to alter his mother's decision; but well aware that the village was his sphere of action, and that there he ought to dwell, he declined the invitation with a sigh, which he tried in vain to suppress. "It would be a happiness, my dear Mrs. Ainsworth, too great to be good for me."

Laura sighed too, at the disappointment of her secret hope, convinced, nevertheless, that the decision of Arthur was right.

CHAPTER XIII.

.....Meek repentance wafting wall-flower scents
From out the crumbling ruins of fallen pride.

It was a severe trial to Mrs. Ainsworth's newly born resolutions, to feel herself a stranger in the house which she had ruled so long, and to be dependent on those who had trembled at the sound of her voice. Painful, too, was the attempt to supply the place of the important sense which she was deprived of, by straining those which remained.

"Look at these beautiful new curtains, mama," said little Annabella thoughtlessly; "papa ordered that they should be green, because it was your favourite colour.—Oh, forgive me, my own mama, I had forgotten all!"—And the child wept and threw herself into her mother's arms.

"God has granted me precious gifts," said the mother "in place of the sight which I have lost. He has given me the love of the children and friends which I have around me. Nay, I shall even enjoy the looking at beautiful things through these dear eyes,"—and she fondly kissed the eyes of her weeping child.

There was truth and reality in the happiness of Mrs. Ainsworth, as the assembled family sat round the

cheerful fire in the drawing-room on that chill autumnal evening. She keenly enjoyed the children's music and Laura's songs; and making them lead her to the piano-forte, she charmed Mr. Ainsworth by singing some of the old melodies of his youth. He declared that 'Kate Kearney' was a hundred times finer than 'Di tanti palpiti,'—"though that Italian affair is a favourite of yours, my dear," added he, "and you certainly sing it well."

"I will sing it no more," said Mrs. Ainsworth: "I shall sing none, but such as give pleasure to my little circle at home."

"You were never half so pleasing in your life, my dear," said Mr. Ainsworth, "and but for your affliction, I should be the happiest man in the world."

"Till the gout came, papa," said Annabella.

"And if we had poor Herbert here," added Emily.

This was indeed the thorn in Mrs. Ainsworth's heart; but she struggled against despondency, putting her trust in the mercies of God. Farley, Herbert's friend and companion, had been made out, and through him it was discovered that the 'Panama,' the vessel in which Herbert had sailed, was a trader bound to Rio Janeiro and Buenos Ayres. Letters had been addressed to the British consuls at both ports, requesting their protection for the boy, if they should meet with him.

About three months passed over before a letter was received from the consul at Buenos Ayres, giving some intelligence. When the 'Panama' reached that port, the consul had gone on board to claim the boy; but the

captain reported that while his ship was lying at Rio, Herbert had got leave to go on shore with some of the men. He, however, had never returned, and the captain having made diligent search for the lad without success, had sailed without him.

The consul stated also that he had inquired of the captain of the 'Panama,' as to the character of the boy and the treatment that he had received on board. That officer allowed that Herbert had at first been wayward and disobedient, and had been put into confinement for a day or two. He had however been released at the intercession of Pat Geoghan, an old sailor, who had promised to look after him and teach him his duty. Under Pat's care he had behaved better, but was after all never good for any thing,—in every body's way, and not worth his meat.

"To be sure," he added, "if I had known that the lad belonged to any friend of yours, I would have looked sharper after him; but I have plenty to think about, without having to drill run-away lads."

Pat Geoghan had been also examined. His answer, according to the consul's report, was this. "Sure, it was the 'cute scholar he was. Musha, what fine words he had, and how free he was with his money, and, sure, he had no want of that. And didn't he promise, when I got him his leave, to bring me the backy I wanted so badly. Holy vargin! if some of them rascally Indians ha'n't got hold of him, for his gold watch and his money."

The consul was unable to obtain any further information. The boy seemed to have been a favourite with all the crew, save the captain. All spoke of him as an obliging, good-natured lad, but worth nothing as a sailor. The consul had written to a friend at Rio, and requested that a proper search might be made at that port. He concluded his letter with politely expressed hopes for the success of their inquiries.

This was a mournful communication. It was only the sympathy of Mrs. Wilmot and her son, and her reliance on the wisdom and providence of God, that enabled Mrs. Ainsworth to bear up under this heavy affliction.

One happy morning Laura received a letter from her father. His first letter to her was from S. Salvador. There he found that Wilton had called on several of their correspondents and obtained considerable sums, but had not succeeded in securing all that was due to the firm. Mr. Temple was fortunate enough to recover debts to a large amount. Mr. Temple's next letter was from Rio Janeiro. Wilton had not visited this port, and Mr. Temple, after making very satisfactory arrangements, sailed to Buenos Ayres. The letter which Laura received, bore the post-mark of Buenos Ayres, and she earnestly hoped that it would announce his speedy return. She sat down in some agitation, and read her father's long communication.

“My Laura will rejoice to hear that I hope to return

in a short time, restored once more to competence and comfort. The wretched man whose dishonesty and fraud has caused us so much anxiety, is now no more. I landed at Maldonado a week ago, and proceeded to the house of Senor Juanico, a respectable Spaniard residing at Buenos Ayres, whose bonds we held for considerable sums. He informed me that Wilton had called on him a week before, and demanded that the whole should be paid off. Senor Juanico requested time to prepare for the payment of such a large sum, but some specious reasons given by Wilton, had induced the Spanish merchant to promise the money in full at the end of the week, and two hours before my arrival he had actually put into my dishonest partner's hands bills and cash to the amount of £10,000. Of many of these bills we feel confident that we can stop the payment; but I was anxious to secure the person of the criminal and the whole of his spoils. Juanico suggested, that after having obtained the necessary authority, we should hire a swift sailing boat, and proceed to Monte Video and Maldonado, and search the vessels in those ports, for he was convinced that Wilton would sail in the first vessel that left the bay.

“Accompanied by some officers of police, we arrived at Monte Video, and immediately set off for the custom-house to make inquiries. During our short run from Buenos Ayres we had been oppressed by the heavy and sultry atmosphere, but the heat now became intolerable. The *pampero*, a fearful hurricane of the climate, suddenly burst upon us. We took refuge in

the first hotel on the quay, that offered us a shelter, and viewed in comparative security the ravages of the tempest. Many of the ships in the harbour were laid on their beam-ends, and boats without number were thrown far beyond high-water mark, staved in or dashed to pieces.

“In about half an hour the storm began to subside, and Senor Juanico and I went to the beach, where crowds of merchants and ship-owners were lamenting the destruction of their property. An intelligent native told me that many lives were lost, and spoke with enthusiasm of the heroism of an English boy, who had gallantly leaped into the waves and brought on shore some foreigner who had been washed from the deck of his ship.

“‘The lad is much bruised,’ added he, ‘but may recover. The man that he saved has received some mortal injuries. A poor man who lives close at hand, on the beach, has taken them into his house. Come with me, and speak to them: they are both your countrymen.’ I was ashamed to be less ardent in the cause of humanity than this stranger, and followed him into a wretched hut where, lying insensible and disfigured with wounds, I discovered the object of my search, Wilton. Though haggard and emaciated, probably from bodily and mental sufferings before this fatal accident, I recognized him at once. It was some time however before I could nerve myself for the painful duty of giving him up to the officers of justice. As he was in no condition to escape, they had no wish to remove him. Senor Juanico now

entered with news that the boat which had been conveying Wilton to the ship in which he was about to sail for Europe, had returned to the harbour in safety, and that the effects of the unfortunate man were lodged in the custom-house. The officers had in the meantime examined his person, and found in a leathern belt fastened round his body all the bills and notes which he had received from Juanico, quite uninjured.

"The surgeon, who had been sent for, after a careful examination, pronounced that Wilton might recover his senses, but that the injuries which he had received were such as to render his death inevitable. I was greatly shocked at the sudden summons of this wicked man, struck down while he was probably triumphing in the success of his schemes. I requested the surgeon to procure all needful comforts, at my expense, and to give me immediate information, if any appearance of intelligence appeared in his patient.

"I then turned to the straw mattress on which the gallant boy was lying. He was a handsome lad of about fourteen, with a countenance full of intellect, though somewhat melancholy in expression. I took his hand and asked him in English how he felt. He smiled as he heard the language of home, and answered, 'I feel very ill, sir, and am perhaps going to die, and I deserve to die. I have been very disobedient and wicked; and if I die now in this strange land, my dear papa and my sisters will never know where my grave is. They will look day after day for my return. Even mama may perhaps forgive me, and grieve that I return no

more;—and dear Miss Temple,—I know that she will weep.’—

“‘What Miss Temple?’ I exclaimed. ‘Is her name Laura Temple?’

“‘Oh, yes! you know her then,’ said he; ‘but pray do not take me home. I cannot return to that dreadful school.’

“He then told me his pathetic tale, which you know too well, and filled my heart with joy and pride, when he spoke of the virtuous and useful life of my dear child.

“You can easily conceive the rest. Herbert is recovering very rapidly. He is living with me, and will return to England with me. But tell Mr. Ainsworth that I will give up his son only on one condition,—that he shall be placed under the care of a master more judicious and better tempered than Dr. Digby.

“Last night Wilton recovered his senses. I was instantly sent for, and hastening to the cottage, I found him sinking rapidly, and overwhelmed with the terrors of a guilty conscience. A charitable priest, summoned by the owner of the hut, was endeavouring to prepare the dying sinner for his end; but mental agony rendered the unhappy man incapable of listening to the words of hope and mercy. My presence seemed to add to his confusion. He could not comprehend the feelings of compassion and anxiety for the salvation of his soul, with which my mind was filled; and exclaimed indignantly and bitterly against, what he called, my triumph over him.

"I assured him that I was too conscious of my own sins, to exult over an erring fellow-creature. I entreated him to forget all the past, and to join me in prayer; but the love of money had turned his heart to stone; no appeals could penetrate it. He, however, delivered to me, in presence of the officers of police and the good priest, a casket, which he had concealed in his dress. It contained vouchers for the money which he had fraudulently obtained, and an account of his expenditure and losses. Then declaring his conscience was now clear of that affair, he turned away and lay for some time in sullen silence, deaf to our continued exhortations.

"At last he suddenly uttered a discordant shriek, and cried out in a broken voice, 'Is it too late? Is it too late? Oh! save me. I am not fit to die, my whole life has been a lie, and God rejects me. What shall I do to be saved?'

"The priest and I forgot our difference of creed. We knelt down, and prayed that God would grant mercy to that sinful soul. All was soon over. We may not penetrate the veil, but let us hope that mercy was bestowed on him. The remembrance of the appalling scene will never be obliterated from my mind.

"If God permits me to reach England in safety, we shall be rich enough. We cannot live at Templeton Court again, but we can all share one common cheerful and comfortable home. How I long to meet my dear virtuous children again, never more to part; for wherever you and my dear boy are, there must I be also.

"I must stay here a week or two longer, to wind up

my affairs. Herbert, too, must have time to recover his strength. He is now busy with his *Xenophon*; I have engaged a clever tutor for him, so that the time spent here will not be wasted.

"We shall not be long in following this letter, if all goes on well. Pray that fair winds and a prosperous voyage may attend your pupil and your fond father,

"CHARLES TEMPLE."

Laura had scarcely patience to finish the letter. When she had read to the end of it, to the great astonishment of the girls, she actually *polked* round the room. Then kissing the children, she whispered a word of the good news, and rushed down to the breakfast-room, to seek Mrs. Ainsworth. In crossing the hall she met Arthur Wilmot.

"Whither is Miss Temple flying, with such a glorious sunshine in her eyes?" he asked.

"I must not be detained, Arthur," cried she, holding up the letter. "Look here! papa may be at home in a few days, and with him Herbert, well and happy. I must hasten to tell Mrs. Ainsworth."

"Stay one moment, Laura," said Arthur, detaining her; "for you are now the little wild Laura again, and not the prudent governess, Miss Temple. Allow me to communicate the good tidings to Mrs. Ainsworth. I do think that just now I should be the more discreet ambassador of the two."

"You are always wise, Arthur. Go at once, and I will return to my anxious children."

Arthur pressed the dear hand that gave him the important letter, and Laura, happy in the conviction that Arthur was a hero of romance, hastened to make her pupils sharers in her joy, by repeating to them the contents of her father's letter.

They were at last summoned to Mrs. Ainsworth's room. They found her quite tranquil, and able to speak with calmness of the mercy vouchsafed to her. Arthur's gentle exhortations had subdued her agitation, and hushed the anxious doubts that flitted through her mind. But she remarked to Laura, "I cannot *see* my boy now, and he will not recognize his mother deformed with scars, and deprived of sight."

"But I am quite sure, mama," said Annabella, "that he will love you three times more than he did when you were beautiful and could see; for I am sure that Emily and I do so—do we not, Emily? You are always so kind now, and we may kiss you whenever we like." Tears fell from Mrs. Ainsworth's sightless eyes upon her affectionate children, as they clung around her.

"Oh, Mr. Wilmot!" said the repentant mother, "why did I not sooner discover all the happiness that springs from the love of one's children. What hours of misery I have endured in proudly struggling against natural affections!"

"God has graciously sent you trials and afflictions," replied Arthur, "and they have revealed to you the precious secret of happiness. Now, rich in the love of your children, you will no longer sigh for the pleasures of the world."

"But, Mr. Wilmot," answered she, with a sigh, "my son does not, and cannot love me."

"I believe that he does love you," said Arthur, "but if I had doubts of his affection, of this I am sure, that when he becomes one of this dear circle, he will soon learn to love you."

CHAPTER XIV.

Je ne voulus point absolument retourner, tant j'étais dégoûté de la manière dont on y enseignait le latin.—LE SAGE.

WHAT an anxious, but happy fortnight was the next at the Priory. At the end of that time came the newspaper report of vessels seen, and amongst them that of Mr. Temple. Then came a telegraphic despatch, "We are arrived in safety."

What a day of preparation, of watching, and of listening, succeeded! How often the girls heard the sound of wheels long before the carriage arrived—for it did arrive at last.

About six in the evening, when the cook was getting fidgetty about the dinner, and darkness put an end to the children's anxious watch, a carriage drove up, and looking out, they saw by the light of the lamps, first, a tall handsome man get out, and then a thin dark-complexioned boy, in a Spanish cloak, with a monkey on his shoulder, and a cage containing two parrots in his hand.

"Mama, mama," cried Annabella, "I am sure it is Herbert. And the monkey, mama, and the parrots! Oh, how I wish that you could see them!"

They rushed into the hall, followed by Laura, almost as wild as they; and more soberly by Mr. Ainsworth, who still limped from his last fit of gout. A joyful meeting there was. Such embraces, and such confusion of tongues; alarmed at the unwonted sounds, the monkey chattered and the parrots screamed loud and long. All the old servants crowded round Master Herbert, and Master Herbert kissed old nurse, shook hands with every body, and thanked Layton, promising to repay his two guineas out of his first pocket-money.

Laura, ever mindful of Mrs. Ainsworth's feelings, turned from her delighted father to remind Herbert that his mama was waiting for him. A letter had been forwarded to Liverpool some days before, to be delivered to Mr. Temple on his landing, inviting him to make the Priory his home, and requesting him to prepare Herbert for the change in his mother's appearance.

"Your afflicted mother is very anxious to embrace you, Herbert," said Laura.

Herbert shrunk back. "Will she be angry with me, Miss Temple? I know that I was very disobedient; but every body else has forgiven me. I hope that God will forgive me; but has mama forgiven me? Mr. Temple, you promised to protect me."

Laura was shocked to see Herbert's reluctance. She, however, quietly appealed to his sense of duty, and then endeavoured to touch his feelings by describing all Mrs. Ainsworth's sufferings, and her intense anxiety about him after his disappearance from school.

"I will go directly, Miss Temple," he exclaimed, "I

will do every thing she wishes, even if she should desire me to return to that dreadful school," and he shuddered as he made the promise.

"Believe me, Herbert," said Laura, "she has no wish to send you back; she has no thought but for your happiness."

They entered the drawing-room, and found Mrs. Ainsworth in great agitation, supported by Mrs. Wilmot, while Arthur was alternately admonishing and comforting her.

"Dear, dear mama!" cried the boy, deeply moved by the altered face of his mother, "I have done very wrong; can you forgive me?"

"My boy, my poor ill-used boy, come to me, and try to love me, if you can. You see how I am changed; but, alas! I cannot *see* any change in you. Let me *feel* that you love me."

The boy wept in his mother's arms, and she was comforted. She knew that God had restored to her the affections of her children, and she silently thanked him.

After dinner Herbert was quite himself again, and so gay and noisy, that Laura began to fear that the merry party would be too much for Mrs. Ainsworth; but these tokens of the affection of her children enabled the happy mother to bear up against fatigue and excitement.

Early in the next morning Laura and her father had a long ramble and an interesting conversation. They had each much to tell,—Laura, of her trials and experience; Mr. Temple, of his anxieties, his disappointments, and his final success. He spoke of their future

home, which he had now the power to make a home of competence and comfort.

After breakfast Mrs. Wilmot and her son joined them, and were soon followed by Harry Beverley, eager to welcome the father of Laura; for Laura, though more grave and composed in manner than when he was first attracted by her, was still his standard of perfection, to the annoyance of his haughty sisters, who endeavoured to mortify his enthusiastic admiration by speaking of her as Mrs. Ainsworth's governess.

The greetings between Harry and his old favourite, Herbert, were hearty and vociferous, and so many questions were to be answered by the latter, that his sisters begged that he would at once give them a narrative of his adventures. Herbert, by no means unwilling to be the hero of a tale, with a little air of importance, commenced his story.

"Now, Miss Temple, do drop the grave old governess, while I am telling the life and adventures of Herbert Ainsworth, who was driven from his native country by the cruelty of a schoolmaster; and who, after many perils and privations, was rescued and brought home by a beneficent genius, not wearing wings, but a black coat like mere mortal men.

"It is all very well for gentlemen of England, and ladies too of England, who live at home at ease, to give grave advice and solemn warnings; but let any of them be kicked about as a boy in a merchantman for a voyage, and then let us see whether he would always be pretty behaved. Let him be knocked about by every body,

if the wind be foul; blamed for every body else's faults, and cursed by the captain whenever that great man speaks to him, and then let us see. Oh, what dreadful oaths did that man utter! I believe that I should never have run away from my old ship, but for the dread of those oaths. I feared them ten times more than the thrashings he gave me. I used to get into a dark corner when he was swearing, and say my prayers. The sailors used all to laugh at me, except Pat Geoghan. 'It's the rael good boy you are,' said Pat; 'its little that's thriven with me, since I was shamed out of that.' Pat is a capital fellow, girls; and I have promised to make him my mate, when I have a ship of my own. If I die before I get a ship, take care that you look to poor Pat. Well, then, I had a sad life of it in the merchantman, and many a time cried myself to sleep in my uncomfortable little berth. I used to lie there thinking about all of you, and of Miss Temple, who never got into a passion when she found out that I had done wrong. Then those dreadful lies began to lie heavily on my conscience, when I considered that I might in a few moments be swallowed up in that dark angry sea, and be called on to answer for all my sins.

"I believe Miss Temple, that a seaman in his gloomy berth in the forecastle or on his lonely watch thinks much more seriously than landsmen are wont to do. I used often to meditate on all I had done and all I intended to do.

"I soon gave Pat a history of my life, and told him in confidence that I had made up my mind, that as

soon as I was allowed to go on shore, I would cut and run, and seek my fortune elsewhere. Pat shook his head and advised me to bear up a little longer; but I declared I would not stand my hard usage. I was determined not to return to England with the ship, for England had then no home for me.

"I should not have disliked being left on an uninhabited island to try the Robinson Crusoe life, which I still think must be a fine thing; but there were no desolate islands in our course, nor if there had been any, should we have touched at them. So I was left to take my chance of escaping at some port. We put in at Rio Janeiro for provisions and repairs. Here we got leave to go on shore to see the city, and a grand city it is with its palaces, and more churches than I could count, with dirty little hovels next door to the palaces, and the streets crowded with poor slaves carrying burdens. But I had little time then to take much notice of what was about me, for I could think only of getting off from the ship. Pat had a friend in the city, a countryman of his, who kept a small wine-house. So when Pat found I was determined to escape, he committed me to the care of the friendly Irishman who promised to conceal me till the ship had sailed.

"I had still the best part of Layton's money left, and Pat contrived to bring me my clothes. As he took leave of me, he put his Bible into my hand, as a 'keepsake.' It is true that the book was not of much use to him, for he could not read, but he used to take great pleasure in hearing me read it to him. His

favourite passage was the account of the shipwreck of St. Paul. 'Sure,' said he, 'it was the rael ganius St. Paul was. He worked his ship as if he had served his time afore the mast. Didn't he know how to save the crew, when it was the Lord's will that the ship was to go to pieces? Sure the Bible is yours now, and when it's captain you are of your own ship, may be poor Pat will be your mate, and will get a chapter again from you.'

"And I have Pat's Bible now, mama, and I will read to you all the beautiful passages which I used to read to Pat, and he would listen to, and then warn me never to disobey Almighty God. I am sure, mama, you will like to hear me as much as poor Pat, did.

"I felt very lonely when Pat left me. His friend O'Brien was however kind enough. He gave me plenty of food, and concealed me in a loft till the vessel left the harbour. The captain must have taken very little trouble about making me out, and sure enough, after all the knocking about I got, I was of very little use to him.

"After our ship had sailed, O'Brien took me to an old widow, living alone, who was very kind to me. She was a native of Rio Janeiro, she spoke French as well as Portuguese, but no English; so it was long before we could converse together. However I soon learned a few useful words, and now I can chatter very tolerably in various tongues. Mr. Temple will give testimony of my skill in languages. Indeed it was much easier to learn Portuguese from old Maria, than Greek from Dr. Digby.

"I was at first afraid of walking about the town, but

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I soon found out that nobody was likely to notice an insignificant little fellow like me. I soon began to wander for miles up the country towards the mountains, keeping however an eye upon the river, lest I should lose myself. Many a time have I dined on delicious oranges and pine-apples, sheltered from the intolerable heat of the noon-day sun under the graceful fronds of the tree-fern or the broad leaves of the palmetto. Oh girls! if you could but see those graceful epiphytes hanging from the branches in those thick woods. You have no flowers half so beautiful in your conservatory. I met with my monkey too in the forests. It had fallen from a lofty palm, and broken its leg. The little animal was very young, and must have lost its mother, for she would never have deserted it had she been living. I bound the broken limb between two pieces of bark without any difficulty, for the poor creature lay quite still during my operation, and looked in my face as piteously and as thankfully as if it knew the object of what I was about. I carried it home, intending to send it as a present to Layton, if I had an opportunity, to shew that I remembered his kindness to me; but I have something of more value for him, so Emily must have the monkey. When old Maria saw it, she actually wished to roast it for my dinner; but I preferred to keep it alive. Though I have been many a time very hungry, I think that I never could have made up my mind to eat roast monkey.

“The animal soon recovered, and was often a source of amusement to me, but I soon became weary of my

idle life. I had no books but Pat's Bible and a Virgil, which was by chance in my pocket when I left school. The Bible I often read, and felt happier for it; but though I had many a trial with my Virgil, I found that I could not read it without a dictionary. I was always a dunce, was I not, Miss Temple?

"After a while, on paying Maria for my lodging, I found that I had exhausted my purse. I could not expect the poor woman to keep me, so I asked O'Brien to get me some employment. He soon heard of a ship that was to sail the following week for Monte Video with a cargo of tapioca and sugar, and made out that the captain wanted a sharp lad. O'Brien immediately recommended me, I felt very grateful to him, though I was rather afraid that I should not be considered a *sharp lad*.

"In a few days I parted with poor Maria, who cried very much, and earnestly entreated me to return with the ship, which was to bring back a loading of Paraguay tea. But this I was determined not to do, if I could meet with any thing to do at Monte Video or Buenos Ayres; for the climate of Rio was so oppressive and scorching, that I always felt lazy and stupid while I was there.

"I was right glad to be at sea once more, and soon felt pretty comfortable on board. I knew my business much better than I did on my first voyage, and though the crew, being all Brazilians, spoke Portuguese, I could now make my way very well with them in that language. The sailors were all tolerably good-natured, but idle

fellows, and as Knip made them laugh, and I often did their work for them, my monkey and I had on the whole an easy life.

“After a rough voyage of about a fortnight, we arrived at the harbour of Maldonado, and working up the river, we anchored off Monte Video.

“I was eager to go ashore, partly from a desire to see a town that was new to me, but my strongest motive was the wish to find out some Englishman willing to befriend me, for I began to be heartily tired of rough work. My shipmates and I worked hard for a week in discharging our cargo, but after this was done, I was sent with two of the crew on some errand to the custom-house, and so I got a peep at the town. As we stood on the mole watching the slaves carrying their heavy loads from the ships, an English gentleman, whose face seemed familiar to me, came hastily up to us, and asked us to give him a cast in our boat to a vessel which had just weighed anchor, and was sailing down the river. Our men, tempted by the handsome reward that he offered, at once consented. The stranger stepped into the boat, and after we had stowed his luggage, we pulled hard to come up with the ship. We had not rowed many minutes, when the wind suddenly changed, and the terrible *pampero* rushed upon us. Vessels on all sides of us were immediately thrown on their beam-ends, and many of them were swamped. We were driven violently towards the shore. The sailors, who are well acquainted with this hurricane of the Plata, threw themselves flat at the bottom of the boat; but

the stranger, who neglected this precaution, was caught by the wind, and swept overboard in a moment.

"I don't know how I came to do such a thing; but, you know, girls, that when I could escape from Made-moiselle, I used to set off to the river with Jack Morley, and he taught me to swim and dive like a duck. I could not bear to see the poor fellow drowned, and so I leaped into the water after him as soon as he sank. I caught him by the hair, but it was terrible work to fight against the heavy surf, and I partly swam, and was partly driven on shore. I suppose that I must have retained my grasp of his hair; but I know little of what happened, till I saw Mr. Temple enter the house to which I had been carried. As soon as I found out who he was, my joy was mixed with some fear that he would bring me back to old Digby. But that fear was soon removed, and I was far happier than I deserved to be after having caused you all so much distress.

"And now, if you please, Mr. Temple, you can tell all about my good friend Carlos, and the rest of the story, and I will go and unpack my curiosities."

Mr. Temple thought that one long story was enough; but he took the opportunity of Herbert's absence to congratulate Mr. Ainsworth on the noble qualities of his son, and to soften the bitterness of Mrs. Ainsworth's remorse, by assuring her that the hardships her son had endured were the best lessons of his life, correcting the bad habits of his childhood, and strengthening the better parts of his character.

Mrs. Ainsworth thanked Mr. Temple warmly for all

his friendly offices, and added "Now that I have regained my boy, it becomes necessary to think of his future education. I wish to exercise due caution, and therefore beg your advice, gentlemen, on the important question. To what school is he to be sent? Mr. Ainsworth proposes Eton. I wish Miss Temple also to give her opinion. For myself, I can have no voice in the matter."

Laura looked at Arthur Wilmot, who, with a smile, signified his acquiescence in her plans, which would have been thus expressed in words.—"The school which sent out Godfrey and Arthur must be unexceptionable." Harry Beverley caught their expressive glances, and exclaimed, "Oh, you are right! I see what you mean, good, thoughtful creatures that you are. Well *we* certainly *are* fine fellows, and though a man may run wild and wander out of the right path for a few years, after he leaves the dear old place, yet the right principles and the glorious examples at Mount Green are armour and shield to him during life. I have determined that my unborn sons, dear little fellows, shall go to the school that educated their father. What a pleasure it will be to me to take them there! What a pleasure to show them H B carved in sundry places on the ugly old desks—to introduce them to the dear old play-ground, with its magnificent view of river, and church, and castle, where Godfrey Temple used to talk sermons, Arthur Wilmot to dream poetry, and Henry Beverley play at cricket. It must be Mount Green, Mrs. Ainsworth."

"It must be Mount Green," echoed Arthur. Laura put her signature to the document; and so before Herbert returned with his curiosities, his commitment was signed.

The presents which Mr. Temple's liberality had enabled Herbert to bring for his friends, gave general satisfaction. In his eagerness to apportion them he certainly committed some blunders, presenting to his mama an Indian spear ten feet long; to each of his sisters a scarlet poncho; and to Layton a case of stuffed humming-birds. After a little consideration he made a fresh disposition of his presents, and pleased every body. The spear was for papa, the ponchos for Henry and Arthur, mama received some rare epiphytes for her conservatory, and cases of the gorgeously beautiful birds and insects of South America, carefully preserved, gave great delight to his sisters. A richly enchased snuff-box of pure gold was presented to Mr. Layton, together with the money which he had supplied to the little runaway. The old servant shed tears of joy, in which he was accompanied by the old nurse, to whom Herbert consigned his parrot, which, she declared, "talked like a Christian."

CHAPTER XV.

All perished! I alone am left on earth!
To whom nor relative, nor blood remains,
No, not a kindred drop that runs in human veins.
CAMPBELL.

WHEN the same party were assembled in the evening, Herbert could not conceal his impatience on the subject of Carlos; Mr. Temple yielded, and, after an apology to Mrs. Ainsworth for its length, commenced his story.

"Herbert wishes his story to be concluded, and I am really anxious to tell you something about the kind and singular being who received his apparently lifeless fellow-creatures into his wretched hut on the banks of the Plata.

"On entering his hovel I was struck by his tall and emaciated figure. He was a young man evidently of Spanish origin. The eager and careful attention which he bestowed on his unexpected guests, was very remarkable. His house, which contained but a few articles of furniture, displayed on every side, signs of poverty and desolation.

"After my first emotion on the discovery of Wilton and Herbert had subsided, I spoke to the young man

in Spanish, which I afterwards found was the only language that he was acquainted with. After thanking him for his hospitality to the strangers, I offered him any remuneration he chose to ask. The warm blood of Spain rushed into his cheeks, and he said, proudly, 'I receive money for my labour, when I need money; but never for helping the afflicted. I also am a man of sorrows.'

"I was touched by the independent spirit expressed in his answer, and with confidence committed my two important charges to his care. I took means to provide for their wants and comforts without giving offence to his feelings.

"After the death of Wilton, and when Herbert could be removed with safety, I begged of Carlos to accompany him to my apartments and continue his care of the boy. He was at first somewhat reluctant to leave his hut; but Herbert's open trusting manner had won the Spaniard's affections, and he at last consented. He stipulated however that he should live in Herbert's room, and not be compelled to mingle with the crowd of servants which the customs of the country impose on residents. I readily complied with this condition, for in fact it had never been my intention that he should mingle with my domestics. The native gentleness of his manners, although he was quite uneducated, attached Herbert and me strongly to him, and our affection at last thawed his reserve. As we were watching one day by Herbert's sofa, he revealed to us his melancholy story. His Spanish was very elegant,

and I give you as faithful a translation as my ability and my recollection can supply.

“ ‘My birth-place,’ he began, ‘and the birth-place of my father was a solitary hut in the pampas, many leagues from any other habitation, and five hundred miles from this city. We were of noble Spanish blood, a distinction which my father never forgot. He constantly inculcated the observance of the maxims handed down from his ancestors:—Never do a mean or servile act;—Ever speak the truth;—Preserve, at the cost of your blood, your life and freedom and independence in this bountiful region in which God has placed you. My heart sinks within me when I recal those days of peace and happiness, gone, never to return!’

“ Carlos covered his face with his hands, apparently absorbed in painful recollections. After a few moments of silence he proceeded:—

“ ‘My brothers and I were taught to ride and throw the lasso, and we rode as the *Guachos* only can ride. This was our education. We pursued and captured the cattle of the pampas, and brought them to our corral, or lassoed the noble wild horse of the plains, and subdued him to the rein. I was a fearless rider, but being the youngest child, and not so bold a hunter as the rest, I was sometimes allowed to remain at home. We had food enough. The cattle of our corral supplied us with *carne de vacca*, and the clear spring gave us water. My father had been taught to read, but we had no book but an old prayer-book in Latin; nor did my father wish to communicate his knowledge to us, even if our

other pursuits had left us time for study. He considered book-learning as useless, if not dangerous. Our lives were to be spent in the vast solitudes of the pampas, and what could we learn from books but discontent with our condition, and artificial wants which we could not satisfy. It may not, after all, be the knowledge of books, that makes the men of towns so false and depraved, for the Indians are ignorant of books, and yet are equally false, and equally depraved. However, till I knew you, my dear friends, I believed that the result of learning must be evil.

“When I was fourteen years of age, I chose, in preference to hunting, to guide the passing travellers to distant stations. They gave me money, or, what was of equal value, the poncho or the knives, which were among our few wants. Occasionally, traders from San Luis supplied us with steel weapons, and brilliantly dyed ponchos, in exchange for our cattle and for *carne chargueda*, or dried beef, the staple food of our plains.

“I approach with reluctance the day which closes the pleasing recollections of my youth. We had killed a noble bullock in the morning of that day. I was soon after summoned to guide a stranger to the next station, and therefore left my father and brothers to their employment of drying the animal's flesh in the sun. After leading the traveller to the next station, I remained there to assist some young *Guachos* in the exciting task of breaking in their young horses, and did not arrive at home till late in the night. I stopped at the corral, to leave my horse, and was walking towards our hut, when

some unusual sounds struck my ear. I paused and listened. The sound was like that of a flight of vultures sweeping to the carcase of a dead bullock.

“‘I now discerned through the gloom of night, a dark mass rapidly approaching. I rushed to the hut; but the door was closed, and the family apparently buried in sleep. With a strong effort I released my almost paralysed tongue, and shrieked out those words of terror, “Los Indos! los Indos!” I then ran back to the corral, in the vague hope that my father and brothers would follow and make an effort to escape.

“‘I now saw the light of blazing torches, and heard the terrific scream which marks the murderous onset of the Indians. Few of their victims hear it, and live to speak of it. Almost unconscious of what I was doing, I crouched among the long grass, and crept to the farthest extremity of the corral, where a favourite horse was picketed, one that I had been wont to caress till it had become as obedient as a child. He recognized me, and laid his head on my shoulder. One of my brothers had been riding him, and the bridle still hung on his neck. I placed the bit in his mouth, and grasping the rein, looked round in hopes of seeing that the rest of our family had followed me:—but I saw nothing but the flames rising high from my beloved home, and glancing on the dark forms of hundreds of the accursed race, grouped round their devilish work. I felt that all I could do would be useless to save the treasures of my heart, and I almost wished to perish with them; but at last, I confess, the love of life prevailed. I cautiously

led my horse from the corral, and, springing upon his back, I touched him with the spur, and he sprung forward at full speed. As I dashed on, my ears were pierced with the agonized shrieks of my mother and my sweet sisters.—Alas! alas! it was then too late to save them, even if my weak hand could have repulsed that savage horde. My well trained horse flew like the wind; but my flight was not unmarked. I had scarcely galloped five hundred yards, when I heard the quick tread of a horseman in pursuit of me. I was thankful that I had only one pursuer.

“I spurred my noble animal to his utmost speed; but in spite of his exertions I perceived that the destroyer was gaining upon me. I heard the panting of his steed behind me,—I almost felt the thrust of his spear. Then rushed into my mind anticipations of the horrible nature of the death that awaited me,—of the tortures at the fiery stake. Every thought was absorbed in the sufferings of the body;—my soul’s salvation was forgotten! I neither heard nor saw, but continued madly galloping onwards.

“I gradually became aware that I was no longer pursued. I ventured a glance behind, though without relaxing my speed. Darkness hid every thing; but through the still air I heard the sound of struggling and a deep groan, which I knew must proceed from the Indian’s horse. I was struck with the conviction that he had trodden in a *biscachero* and fallen. Hope woke again within me. I still galloped on with desperate speed, and reached the next station in safety,

but overwhelmed in misery. I was kindly received, and when I recovered power to tell my dreadful tale, it was listened to with sympathy and compassion. During the long night I brooded over my afflictions. At last the morning light enabled me, accompanied by my friends at the station, to return to the ruined home of my childhood.

“On the spot where I had lost the sounds of pursuit, we found the Indian’s horse lying dead. It had, as I suspected, struck its feet into a *biscachero*, and broken both its legs. Its master’s spear had then put an end to the animal’s life and sufferings. The Indian, probably maimed by his fall, had been carried off by his companions.

“As we came near the hut, my heart sank within me. I saw the smoking walls of the rude, but dear home of my childhood. I paused at the doorway, and would have stepped back; but my friends urged me on. I entered,—can the horrors of that sight be ever obliterated from my memory? Father, mother, brothers, sisters—all lay barbarously murdered! I sickened at the sight, and fell senseless among the blood-stained corpses. The Guachos placed me, insensible as I was, on my horse, and supporting me on each side, led me for ever from the tomb of all I loved on earth. The motion of the horse restored animation, but I was no longer conscious of my condition. I, who had never known sickness, lay for weeks helpless and a burden to my hospitable friends. In the delirium of fever I raved about that scene of carnage, and bewailed my

weakness in abandoning my family in the hour of need.

“ ‘I received from my good friends all the attentions they could bestow. I was young and strong,—but why do I speak thus?—It was the will of God that I should recover. Why, He alone knows,—for since that time I have been a useless cipher in the world. I could no longer hunt, for I dared not venture out of sight of the station, lest the Indians should surprize me. I trembled at every strange sound. I blush to tell it,—I was a disgrace to the noble race from which I sprang. I had become a coward!

“ ‘A benevolent merchant, travelling from San Luis to Buenos Ayres, and fatigued with his journey, chose to rest a day at the station. He saw my melancholy state, and was moved with compassion. Won by his kindness, I spoke for the first time of the past. I made known to him my story, and my resolution to seek another mode of life. After gently soothing my excited feelings, he offered to take me to Buenos Ayres, and find me some employment in the city. I recoiled from the thought of a town life; but I had no longer a choice,—the brave alone can be free.

“ ‘I followed him, stipulating only that I should not be employed in a servile office. He obtained from the government of San Luis a small sum as a compensation for the destruction of our cattle and hut. I accompanied my benefactor to Monte Video, and there the hut in which you found me was purchased for me. I chose it, because it stood apart from the city, and

looked on the broad waters of the Plata. I should have been suffocated in the narrow streets and crowded thoroughfares of Monte Video.

“The few simple articles of furniture, which you saw in my hut, were all I would accept. More I had never possessed, and I wished for no more. For food I needed only that of the Pampas, beef and water, but my kind friend induced me to eat bread, and I have learned to like it. In return for his benefits, I employ myself in dressing the skins of his cattle, and plating the thongs from which we form our bridles and ropes. With this humble acknowledgment my benefactor is satisfied. He frequently visits my hut, and indeed conversation with him has been my only pleasure; but I have ever refused to enter his house or form other acquaintances. I still have a fear of men. During the five years I have lived here, I have held no intercourse with the people, except when some half-drowned wretch was brought to my hut. I have pleasure in bestowing such cares on the sufferers, as were showered on my head by the good Christians in the wilderness.

“It was thus that by God’s mercy I met with you, excellent man, and with this fair youth. For the first time since my self-degradation I have entered the dwelling of a stranger; for I love you, brothers of my heart, and with you I feel as if I were once more a man!”

“He ceased, and his melancholy countenance gleamed with unwonted pleasure as he fixed his eyes on Herbert. I fear that I have failed in giving you any idea of the poetical flow of the musical language of Spain, in which

he delivered his narrative. I feel that my version is tame and prosaic.

“When the time arrived for our departure for England, after some consultation with the Spanish merchant, his protector, I proposed to Carlos that he should accompany us. Without hesitation he consented. He was eager to leave a country, where he lived in constant dread of the spear of his foes, and the scorn of his fellow-countrymen. Yet I was aware that the experiment was hazardous. The climate of England might be as inimical to his health, as its customs might be to his disposition. It was however impossible to separate him from Herbert; so after an affecting interview between Carlos and his patron, we embarked together full of hope in a happier future.

“During our voyage, which must have been irksome to a native of the Pampas, I took some pains to describe to Carlos the customs of the country to which he was about to be introduced, and the necessity of conforming to them. He submitted with perfect docility, and even consented to adopt the inconvenient English dress, retaining however the poncho; a part of his costume which I admired too much to be urgent in requesting him to resign it.

“I was much embarrassed when, on landing, we found your invitation, in which of course our unknown companion was not included. Though Herbert wished to introduce him at once, I thought it prudent to make the peculiar circumstances of Carlos’s life known to you, before he entered your house. Herbert then, happily,

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proposed that we should leave him at the cottage of John Graham the gamekeeper, in the park. As we passed his door I explained to honest John the peculiarities of his guest. I then prepared and reconciled Carlos to a short separation from us, and left him, looking very uncomfortable, in what we should consider a very comfortable home."

CHAPTER XVI.

Sound needed none,
Nor any voice of joy; his spirit drank
The spectacle.

WORDSWORTH.

"Now, papa," said Herbert, who had impatiently waited the conclusion of Mr. Temple's narrative, "now may I go for Carlos?"

"Of course, my dear boy," said Mr. Ainsworth; "let us have the fine fellow directly. Wonderful riders those Guachos are! I have something in my commonplace book about their riding. You would wish the Guacho to come, would you not, my dear?" added he, addressing Mrs. Ainsworth. She agreed without hesitation, and Herbert was flying off, but Mr. Temple detained him.

"It would be prudent to consider where Carlos is to be placed in this house. I have promised that he shall not live with servants."

"But, Mr. Temple, you do not rank him as a gentleman?" said Mrs. Ainsworth, in a tone of inquiry.

"Certainly not," answered Mr. Temple, "according to the arbitrary distinctions which constitute the gentleman in this country. He has a noble and generous heart; but the conventional manners of a society new to him, he has yet to acquire. He might shock the

propriety of your table by cutting a slice of beef from the round with his own knife, and, if he should so far forget Herbert's instructions, might even hold the slice in his fingers till he had, in a primitive fashion, satisfied his appetite. I believe therefore, Mrs. Ainsworth, that it would be prudent to leave him a little longer at John Graham's. I saw Carlos this morning, and he appeared quite as contented as I had reason to expect. The frank and simple manners of his host will thaw the young Guacho's reserve. After a while he will begin to comprehend John's broad provincial dialect, which at present is unintelligible to him, though by Herbert's persevering instructions he can speak a little and understand a good deal of pure English. Carlos is still young, only your age, Henry; and in a short time, I have no doubt, he will overcome the restraint and irksomeness of new habits, and become an English gentleman in manners, as he is truly in heart. But then,—he cannot read."

"I will teach him," exclaimed Laura eagerly. Herbert laughed heartily at the idea of Laura taking Carlos for a pupil, and even the benevolent Arthur thought the scheme impracticable.

"I hope, Laura," said her father, "that by combining our labours, we shall succeed in making Carlos a useful member of society and a good Christian; but I fear that we shall fail in making him a scholar. The unrestrained freedom and active pursuits of his youth have probably unfitted him for the habit of steady application necessary for higher studies. The attempt

would be irksome to him, and certainly unsuccessful. But he may acquire a competent knowledge of the useful arts of social life without much sacrifice of his habits of action. Even his morbid dislike to field sports may be in time overcome."

"But I cannot wait till Carlos shall be converted into a gentleman," said Harry Beverley; "I am all anxiety to see a real Guacho of the Pampas: and I know that Miss Temple wishes to accompany me, for I see her eye sparkling with the brilliancy of the romance she has already founded on his history."

Laura blushed, for she could not but confess that her imagination had been highly excited by the story of this interesting stranger, and she really longed to see him; but Mr. Temple advised that he should not at first be embarrassed by the presence of too many visitors. It was therefore agreed that Herbert should commence by introducing Harry Beverley and Arthur Wilmot.

As they approached Graham's cottage, they saw the lofty form of Carlos, with his poncho folded gracefully round him. He was leaning against the doorway of the cottage, and evidently gazing with wonder and delight on the new and beautiful prospect lying before him. The spacious park was clothed with hundreds of patriarchal trees. The naked branches of the massive oak, and the wide-spreading beech, and the dark foliage of the yew, were alike gemmed with glittering icicles; while herds of graceful deer, tamed by the cold, were grouped together, waiting their daily supply of food.

It was easy to anticipate what the feelings of Carlos would be when the stern beauty of winter gave place to the rich verdure of spring. Mr. Temple was struck by the flashing eye of the Guacho as he gazed on the herds of deer. The feeling of the sportsman was not yet extinguished.

When Carlos saw the party approaching, he stepped forward to meet Herbert with alacrity. "It delights me much to see you, brother of my heart," said he, with the musical intonation of the Spaniard.

He did not shrink from Harry and Arthur, but with head erect and free step walked forward to meet them. He appeared to have recovered in his new home all his native energy. He seemed now reconciled to the world. He extended his hand to them in the English fashion, saying, "I give much thanks to all. All are to me much kind. I cannot be weary of this beautiful land. Here it is for me to dwell for ever."

Harry and Arthur were soon on friendly terms with Carlos, and with the help of a little Spanish and a little English, they could converse tolerably well. In a few days the young Guacho was introduced to the rest of the family. He continued for some time silent and reserved with females, whose appearance and manner appeared to his unsophisticated nature somewhat artificial. It was finally arranged that he should for the present continue to reside with John Graham, but in all Herbert's hours of leisure, Carlos was his chosen and happy companion.

Herbert was to commence his studies at the Mount Green school after the Christmas vacation. In the meantime Arthur gave him daily lessons, and Laura, so long as she resided at the Priory, contributed her help. Her father, who was anxious to enjoy the society of his daughter at a fireside of his own, agreed to reside for a time in Miss Temple's cottage.

The announcement of Laura's approaching departure from the Priory, caused deep regret. The little girls were inconsolable, and Mrs. Ainsworth acknowledged that she was unworthy of such a friend, and wept bitterly at parting with her. The poor universally deplored the loss of their friend; but there were two hearts which above all were heavy at the thought of the separation.

One fresh morning in November, Mr. Temple having ridden to the cover with Mr. Ainsworth, Laura left the girls with their mama, and set out on a solitary walk to Mrs. Wilmot's cottage. As she passed through the gate of the park, she met Harry Beverley riding at a very slow pace, a most unusual practice with him. He immediately dismounted, and throwing the bridle of his horse over his arm, walked by her side.

"Why is Harry Beverley, the mighty hunter, a truant from the field this morning?" asked Laura.

"I was not quite up to the thing," replied Harry; "I was thinking of other matters. By the bye, I don't see any reason why you should leave the Priory, Laura."

Laura smiled, and suggested her duty to her father.

"But how shall we get on without you?" said he impatiently. "Who will follow Mrs. Ainsworth in her solemn visits of charity, and, like pity in the allegory, 'drop balm into the wounds she makes?' Who, to beguile me from my idleness and extravagance, will draw tempting plans of landscape-gardens, and picturesque cottages, and pretty schools, all to cost no more than the price of the hunter it was so easy for me to resign? I shall never do a good action after I have lost you, Laura."

"Oh, Henry Beverley!" cried Laura, "I trust you have a higher motive for doing good than that of pleasing me."

"I sometimes try to fancy that I have," answered he; "but you are my guardian angel, and—now, dear, dear Laura, I must speak out,—I know two fellows desperately in love with you. Now, do not look so indignant, but hear me. One of these true lovers is the best and noblest of his kind; the other is that idle good-for-nothing fellow, Harry Beverley. Take him, with all his faults, and you will save him from many a sin; and he promises to be the best husband in the world."

"Henry," exclaimed Laura, half terrified by the wildness of his manner; "how can you talk to me of marriage? What would Lord and Lady Beverley think, if you were to propose Mrs. Ainsworth's governess to them as a daughter?"

"They would soon doat on you," said he, "as every body else does. Besides, my good grandmother made me independent of any one's sanction, by leaving me a pretty estate of a thousand a-year, with a house that would satisfy even your artistic eye. Then there is a parish full of poor—such a field for charity, such scope for your educational plans! I do believe that not a soul in the village can read. The schoolmaster never ventured there, for my grandmother would permit no schools. The old lady used to say, that she never knew a good servant who had been at school. We would open an academy at the manor-house, Laura, dear. I would undertake myself to teach all the dirty little urchins up to two syllables. Why don't you smile at my nonsense, Laura? I am running on thus to hide my own seriousness, for I am deeply serious now, when I pray my dear little old friend to accept me."

"How sorry I am, Henry Beverley!" said Laura after a long pause, "that you have said all this to me. It is the first time any one has spoken seriously to me of love. It is in general very pleasant for a woman to know that she is loved; but now I feel nothing but pain. I cannot marry you, and I should grieve very much, if, by my refusal, I should lose the dear friend of my youth."

"Why do you refuse me, Laura?" said Harry in a low voice.

"We are not old enough or wise enough to marry," answered Laura; "nor are we suited to each other. We

have the like defects of character ; we are both rash and impetuous. Indeed, Harry, such a union could not be happy."

"Speak honestly, Laura," said Henry ; "you do not love me. You love another."

"I have never thought of love before, Harry," replied Laura with tears in her eyes. "I regard you as a dear and true friend ; but I can never be your wife."

Harry saw that she was in earnest, and they spoke no more, but sadly and silently entered Mrs. Wilmot's cottage. The good old lady was struck with the unusual gravity of her young friends ; but, having some suspicion of the truth, she was discreetly silent. Arthur's absence of mind was habitual, and when Laura was near he was wont to forget every thing but the circumstance of her presence. The embarrassment of the two young people as they entered the room, was therefore wholly unnoticed by him.

Laura remained but a short time at Mrs. Wilmot's, and taking for her escort Herbert, who had just finished his lessons, she walked home, pensive, and by no means so elated as young ladies generally are after receiving an offer of marriage. She thought it her duty to communicate to Mr. Temple her rejection of her noble lover's proposal, which she did with some confusion. Her father was somewhat astonished, and in truth a little disappointed, when he heard her tale, for Harry Beverley was an especial favourite, and would moreover have been a most acceptable son-in-law ; but he did not for a moment think of influencing his

daughter's decision. He merely assured Laura that he was glad to have her with him a little longer.

Harry Beverley, the unhappy rejected, turned to his friend as soon as Laura had left the cottage, and in a milder vein than usual exclaimed,—“Whither must I direct my flight, Arthur? London is as dead as the winter leaves. It is vain to think of rousing the fellows at Cambridge to some wild frolics. They are fearfully hard-working and slow at the beginning of term. I might, to be sure, set off for Russia, but by this time all the rivers will be frozen up. As for the soft South, with all its sentiment and refinement, I'm not i' the vein for it just now. Help me, Arthur, for I am in despair. What do you say to my joining the expedition in search of poor Franklin? Or—there's the Caffir war. I wish to set my life upon a cast.”

“Your despair is a mystery to me, Harry,” said Arthur; “but if you want some field for the exercise of your superabundant activity, why not improve your estate? Why not labour to raise the condition of your tenants and dependents? There is very much, I know, for you to do.”

“Then go and live there yourself, Arthur,” replied Harry, “and set about the work yourself. You will do it ten times better than I, and I have now, Arthur,—I have now no heart for any rational employment. Perhaps the fair and fastidious Laura may be more yielding to your poetical speeches and winning deeds of charity. Pray, make the attempt. I am all anxiety to learn the result.”

"I conclude then, Harry," said his friend, "that you have declared your love, and have been unsuccessful. You were at least happy in being in a position which enabled you to ascertain your fate. You know that my poverty prevents, and probably will ever prevent, me from venturing to address any lady. I do not deny, dear Harry, my admiration, nay, my ardent love of Miss Temple; but I must be silent. I must not think of marrying."

"Forgive me, Arthur," replied Harry, "I have no unfriendly feeling towards you, but a most bitter feeling towards all the world. Surely, when we were young, she preferred me to you; and now, when I have worked like a slave to become something like her, she casts me off, and I do believe, Arthur, she would accept you if you were to propose."

It was with some emotion that Arthur replied, "Spare me, Harry, the mockery of such a hope. What, Laura Temple accept the plain Arthur Wilmot? She that used to ridicule 'Riquet with the tuft,'—Ah, Henry! when you told me the name she gave me, you crushed my presumption for ever. No, we are both rejected; but your buoyant spirits will soon rise above the vexation. Let me entreat you to tread in the path you have wisely entered. Trust me, life has many a flower in reserve for you. These are light afflictions, soon carried off on the current of our duties, and gliding along that stream, dear Harry, we may defy the storms of passion and the wreck of our hopes."

They separated, as friendly as ever, though each had

a thorn rankling in his heart. Harry could not forget the mortification to his pride, as well as the disappointment of his cherished hopes. Arthur was not so perfect, but that he was haunted by a shadowy dream of a bright and happy home that might have been his own.

CHAPTER XVII.

Books

Were ready comrades, whom he could not tire;
Of whose society the blameless man
Was never satiate.

WORDSWORTH.

ARTHUR WILMOT did not allow his plans for the profitable employment of Harry's time to lie long dormant. About a week after their last conversation the two friends set out together to visit Harry's poor cottagers, or, as he himself described it, "on a mission among the heathen." The village of Low Wolstan lay in the parish of Wolstan, of which Dr. Bellingham was the vicar. A curate lived in the vicarage, which the affluent dignitary condescended not to inhabit, but dwelt in an elegant modern mansion not far from Beverley Abbey.

The vicarage was in a miserably dilapidated state. The curate, an old man of considerable learning but of indolent habits, confined himself to two of the smallest rooms, while the spacious dining and drawing rooms were unfurnished and hung with cobwebs. When Harry and his friend called on Mr. Sedley, they found him seated at his frugal breakfast with his old housekeeper, his

only servant, or rather, the mistress of himself and his house, for Martha governed both with arbitrary rule.

The friends having declined to share a meal which was barely sufficient for one, Harry inquired how his congregation went on.

"Truly, Mr. Beverley," answered the old man, "my people are lost and wandering sheep. They refuse to hear my voice. I try in vain to recall them to the fold. They heed me not when I address them; nay, they revile me with bitter words. If I venture to enter their dwellings the women drive me away with loud and angry vituperation, rudely bidding me to mind my own business, as if the visiting my flock were not my especial business. The men and women alike scoff at me, Mr. Beverley. I laboured long to teach the children their catechism, and my success was great until my housekeeper, Martha, refused to bestow the cakes and apples which they loved; whereupon I saw them no more."

"Lord help you, master!" cried Martha, "they came for naught else. Did they ever learn the answers you set them to learn? Never a word. And I was to make cakes for such like! And then you used to say to them in your soft way, 'You'll do better next time, my little dears,' when you would have sarved them right by giving 'em a sound whipping."

"But, Martha," asked Henry, "why did you not try to teach them their catechism yourself, as it ought to be done?"

"Why, to tell the truth, Master Henry," said she; "I'se no scholar. But for the matter of that, I see no use in your grand college scholars, like him," pointing to her master. "John Gregg, the Methody, is worth ten of your college folks at a bit of preaching; but I'll never hear any body else say that. I always stand up for our own church, as surely I ought." Here Martha looked round with the self-satisfied air of one who was truly a pillar of the church.

"It grieves me much, Mr. Sedley," said Arthur, "to hear that you have such a disobedient flock. Perhaps the remonstrances of a stranger might have some weight with them. I should be happy to use my humble endeavours to rouse them to a sense of their duties, if you would allow me the use of your pulpit for a few Sundays."

"Willingly, Mr. Wilmot," answered the curate; "I accept your offer with gratitude; but I fear that your exhortations will avail little, inasmuch as my congregations are small."

"Small!" echoed Martha; "speak out like a man. There's just ourselves, John Hall the sexton, Tommy Norris the clerk, two or three deaf old women, and the schoolmaster, when he has not been drunk on Saturday night. There's nobody to preach to, Mr. Wilmot. He has a drawer full of grand sermons, none better anywhere (though I say it that should not say it,) for folks that can tell what they mean. But, bless you, they're over fine and soft for sinners like our town's-folk. If he wants them to hear him, he'll have to preach, like John

Gregg, on the town-green, for to church they'll never come."

"Peace, Martha, peace!" said her master. "It might be, Mr. Wilmot, that some of these poor misled wretches would listen to you, if you visited them with Mr. Beverley. You might seize an opportunity of casting forth a few good seeds."

"I would propose," said Harry Beverley, "the novelty of a change. I want to repair this old ruinous house, which is, by the bye, uncomfortably large for you, Mr. Sedley. What do you say, Martha, to taking your master over to High Wolstan for a while, to teach Mr. Wilmot's school-children their catechism. They are well-behaved urchins, and learn without cakes. In the meantime Mr. Wilmot will stay with me at the manor-house, and we will try to reform this heathenish place."

"I dare say you are quite right, Mr. Beverley," said the meek curate; "I am sinking into the vale of years. Mr. Wilmot, in the vigour of youth, is better fitted to cleanse this Augean stable. Do as you will with me. Only leave me my books, and Martha to take charge of me."

"There is a pretty cottage near my mother's," said Arthur, "fortunately at liberty. Martha will soon put it into order for you, and I will look after your books."

"I will take care of them myself, Mr. Wilmot, if you please," said the old curate; "they are old friends, and deserve my care. I shall convey them, at intervals, in my pockets, as I am loathe to lose sight of them; for

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every volume contains annotations on loose papers, which I would fain save from being scattered on the highways."

Arthur ventured to suggest the use of packing-cases; and succeeded in convincing the old man that it was by no means necessary to convey each several volume with his own hand, in order to ensure its safety. Arthur would gladly have offered Mr. Sedley an apartment under his mother's roof; but Martha, a necessary evil in the poor curate's lot, was a guest that would have tried even Mrs. Wilmot's equanimity of temper.

The conditions of the treaty being agreed upon, in a few days Mr. Sedley, his treasured books, and Martha, his grand vizier, were actually settled in the village of High Wolstan. Workmen were soon busy in restoring the faded glories of the vicarage, under the direction of Harry Beverley; while his friend laboured to bring back the rebellious flock to the fold.

Harry Beverley had for several days refrained from visiting the Priory, a subject of astonishment and regret to all who were not in the secret of the cause. His gay and rattling conversation had become a source of enjoyment to Mrs. Ainsworth; Herbert and Emily delighted in his kindred good-humour; and even Laura acknowledged to herself, that she felt a void in the circle when Harry's vivacity was wanting.

But Harry's buoyant spirits did not long droop under his disappointment. After a week had passed, he came in after his usual manner, and, except that he spoke less to Laura than had been his wont, and that

he called her 'Miss Temple,' there was nothing to excite suspicion that such an important era in his life was past, as the rejection of his first proposal. He was accompanied by Lord and Lady Beverley, who were scrupulous in their attentions to their afflicted neighbour.

"What has kept Mr. Beverley from us so long?" asked Mrs. Ainsworth. "The cheerful tones of his voice are among the most pleasing consolations of my solitude. I have pined in his absence. I could fancy that even now there is something less joyous than usual in his greeting."

"No wonder," replied Lady Beverley; "for he has lately spent too much time with that very dull, good young man, Mr. Wilmot. They are engaged in some absurdly romantic plan for creating a model community in that abyss of darkness, filth, and vice, the colliery village of Low Wolstan."

"My mother never believed that the people were quite incorrigible," observed Lord Beverley. "I remember that we used to have faithful servants from the village; but certainly it was in the days of poor Dr. Bellingham's youth. He then performed his duties very meritoriously in both the villages, and was popular even with the pitmen; but from neglect they gradually fell into evil habits, even before Mr. Sedley was engaged, and he was quite inadequate to the task of reclaiming them. You will be sorry to hear, Mrs. Ainsworth, that our old friend the Doctor is rapidly declining."

"We shall scarcely feel his loss, now," said Lady

Beverley. "In fact, if *we* bestow the living judiciously, we shall gain an agreeable neighbour."

Lord Beverley was silent. He knew the weight of his lady's *we*. Although he had his wishes on the subject, he felt that his power had passed from him.

Arthur Wilmot had by this time joined the party, and, earnestly pressed by Harry, he endeavoured to remove Lady Beverley's doubts of the success of their Quixotic undertaking.

"I cannot help indulging a strong hope that good will spring from our exertions," said Arthur; "but to make this unhappy place 'a model village,' we must have powerful female aid. If some of you, young ladies, would deign to visit these miserable women, to show them the beauty of virtue, you might inspire them with a desire to improve their condition. This ambition would be useful, and would give us an opportunity of sowing in their hearts that good seed whose unfailing fruits are purity and peace. I am, however, not about to preach a sermon to you, Lady Beverley; but let me entreat that you will forgive the presumptuous hope which Harry has encouraged me to entertain—the hope that some of the gentle inmates of Beverley Abbey will stretch forth a hand to help these poor creatures."

"Harry could never expect," said Lady Beverley, indignantly, "that his mother or his sisters would, on any consideration, expose themselves to the fury of those dreadful women. We never venture to drive through the village, and certainly, unless some miraculous change

should be wrought there, we shall never enter their impure abodes."

Laura longed to offer her assistance, but she could not offer it to Harry Beverley; she had rejected his terms. She knew that she could be of service in softening and teaching these ignorant and neglected women. "But Arthur will accomplish all," she thought; "he will play with the children, and win them with his gentleness. He will speak mildly but firmly to the mothers. He will feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and help the infirm. At last their prejudices will be subdued. They will learn to love him; and then he will pour into their hearts the waters of life, and save them—and I must not assist him."

"One thing must be," suddenly exclaimed Harry, breaking up her speculations; "the next vicar, mama, must be bound to reside at the vicarage. I undertake to make it comfortable."

"Quite ridiculous, Henry," replied his mother; "no man of any distinction would accept the living on such terms. When the dear Doctor is taken from us," continued the lady, with a gentle sigh, "I hope that his successor will be induced to live at Wolstan Lodge. May he be as good a neighbour as the Doctor was, till the gout laid him up! I never was at a loss, Mrs. Ainsworth; he was always ready to make up a party at an hour's notice."

"That I will confirm," said Harry. "The good old man knew well, that if your guests were found wanting, your dinners never were; and he fully appreciated

Verney's exquisite cooking. Don't say a word, mama ; Arthur has administered the necessary reproof in a look of sorrow for my levity. I plead guilty. This was not the moment to recall the old man's foibles."

"His foibles were never offensive, Harry," said Lady Beverley. "Dr. Bellingham was a man of birth, of finished education, and polished manners."

"Take care, mama," cried Harry. "You have given Arthur a text, and he will seize the opportunity of delivering a discourse on the duties and responsibilities of men to whom much has been given."

"Indeed I have no intention of taking such an unseasonable liberty," said Arthur. "My cares are more for the poor, than the rich ; and I still hope, that when we have smoothed the rough places, the ladies will help us to reclaim these young Heathens in a Christian land."

"I will go," exclaimed Emily, "if mama will allow me ; and if Miss Temple will go with me."

"You are a dear, good little girl, Emily," said Harry. "With an army of heroines like you, we shall overcome every difficulty. Emily Ainsworth, you are our first recruit!"

But Low Wolstan was not yet in such a state as to render the aid of ladies available, and the time for Laura's departure was fast approaching. For the last time, in her character of governess, she wrote to Minna from the Priory.

"And thus, my dear Minna, thus ends my educational

experiment. My ardour for the reform of my juvenile fellow-creatures is well-nigh quenched. Henceforward I must be content to dispute the palm with Mrs. Butler, and teach the young idea how to make shirts and knit stockings.

“What a small amount of good all my brilliant speculations have produced, except to myself! I have indeed learned to form a more correct estimate of my own powers, and to know my most prominent failings. I wish I could add that I have learned to amend these failings; but after all my struggles, I often fear that you, dear Minna, and kind Miss Aylmer, will find me as weak and erring as ever. I am an inveterate castle-builder, and as soon as the storms of life have overthrown one of my frail fabrics, with untired energy I lay the foundation of others, equally useless and unstable, and thus waste the precious hours of life. Oh, that I possessed the wisdom and discretion of Minna Seymour, the pearl of noble maidens!

“Ask me no questions about Harry Beverley, Minna. I allow that he is not the *preux chevalier* my early fancy pictured him; but he is a kind-hearted, noble fellow, willing to perform works of charity, but so thoughtless that he would never perform them rightly but for Arthur Wilmot, who is his ‘Knowledge’ and his ‘Discretion.’

“In the joy of returning to my dear home, I fear that I do not regret, as I ought, the parting from Mrs. Ainsworth. But it is consoling to think that I leave her a much happier woman than I found her. She is

beloved by her children, and resigned to the will of God. Alice Dent is here, a treasure beyond price to Mrs. Ainsworth. She is cheerful, intelligent, happy, and beloved by every body. In Templeton, her refined mind shrank from familiar intimacy with the villagers. Here she seems quite at home, and plays with the children with all her heart. She, however, prefers Mrs. Ainsworth's apartments, and there supplies my place efficiently. She reads excellently, and with a thorough appreciation of the elegant authors which that lady selects. They have successively history, travels, poetry, and divinity. It is astonishing how soon the ear of an imperfectly educated girl has enabled her to acquire the accent and style of a well educated woman. John and Nanny Dent are to live at the Park Lodge, where Alice can visit them every day; but this house will, I think, be her permanent abode.

"The lady whom your mama recommended as governess is a valuable acquisition to the children, who, with Alice, have already commenced their studies under her. She appears to possess equal talent and experience, and will probably succeed in all that I failed to accomplish. She has probably little taste for the childish recreations with which I indulged my pupils; but Alice will succeed to my share of the play. Mrs. Keith is, however, polite enough to say, that I have removed the greater difficulties in her road, and there is some glory in being the pioneer to a conqueror.

"Papa has not yet fixed on a home, as he waits till Godfrey has taken a living, which he expects soon to

have the offer of, for Godfrey is not one of those who linger for years in expectation of rich benefices. Then, my dear Minna, we hope to settle near that pretty parsonage, which my foolish fancy has not only sketched, but furnished with inhabitants.

“Adieu for a short time. Amidst my many errors and absurd fancies, I have ever been my dear Minna’s own

“LAURA.”

CHAPTER XVIII.

“Here’s goodly gear!”—SHAKSPEARE.

AT last the hour of parting arrived, sufficiently painful, though the friends hoped to meet again frequently. Mrs. Ainsworth, once so haughty and self-relying, felt in her now dependent state how precious a friend like Laura was. Mr. Ainsworth shrank from the stately new governess, whom he felt certain he could never ask for “Tom Bowling.” The little girls wept bitterly, and Herbert entreated that Laura would come over at Midsummer to see the prizes which he intended to bring home from Mount Green school.

And thus Laura left the Priory, which she had entered with fear and reluctance. She quitted it with her imagination chastened, her mind improved, and her affections enlarged. She carried away with her the love and gratitude of its inhabitants, and left a void in its domestic circle not easily to be filled up.

Laura was welcomed with tears of joy by her gentle and loving aunt, whom she found occupied in making new dresses for her school-girls at Christmas.

“Dear, dear child,” cried Miss Temple, “never, I

trust, to part again. You must never leave me, Laura, for I am utterly helpless. I can do nothing without you."

"Indeed, dear aunt," said Laura, after she had found her old seat, "indeed I think that you are doing very well without me. You seem to have a complete draper's warehouse about you; but would not brown dresses be more useful to the girls than these beautiful bright green frocks?"

"*'Et tu Brute!'*" exclaimed Miss Temple. "I little expected this from you, Laura. Minna indeed shakes her pretty wise head at me. But you know my weak point. I do think it hard that poverty, in addition to its many privations, should be condemned to wear a gloomy garb. I therefore indulge my own taste, and give pleasure to my little girls, by clothing them in a cheerful colour."

Laura could not object to her aunt's whim; for she acknowledged in her own heart a strong antipathy to the sad-coloured charity of the prudent alms-givers.

This was an evening of intense interest to Miss Temple; for though Laura had no stirring adventures to relate, it was a pleasure to the affectionate aunt to listen to the history of the feelings and fancies of her darling.

"I have only one disappointment to acknowledge, my beloved child," said the aunt. "I fancied, nay, I was confident, that you would have many lovers, and that you must form some high alliance."

"With a duke, for instance, aunt," said Laura laugh-

ing; "but, besides that we never saw dukes at the Priory, I do believe that from his Grace of N * * * downwards, the whole bench of dukes are provided with duchesses, except one or two inveterate old bachelors; and surely, aunt, you will permit me to marry a young man, if I marry at all?"

"Of course, my dear," answered Miss Temple; "but there are several young noblemen yet unmarried. I fear that the circle at the Priory has been somewhat contracted. . . . Ah, Laura! I see that you are laughing at my foolish speculations, and with reason too; for, after all, I am much happier to see you sitting there, cutting out that pretty tippet, than if I were aunt to the future Lady Beverley."

Laura saw clearly that her aunt's peculiar disappointment was, that her darling niece was not the chosen of Harry Beverley, and she prudently suppressed for the present all allusion to the offer which she had rejected. She felt no regrets herself for her decision, and cut out her tippets, thankful that she was not Lady Beverley's daughter-in-law.

The next morning Laura set out, with her aunt, to visit her old friends in the village, and there many a blessing welcomed the return of the ever cheerful and generous girl. Her re-appearance amongst them was an important event in the quiet life of the villagers, and gave them a pretext for recounting all the joys and sorrows that had been their lot during her absence. She lent a willing ear to all their tedious details, and ~~l~~ed on all the precious gift of sympathy, lament-

ing the death of Betty Williamson's cow, and rejoicing in the birth of her grandson, pitying the increasing infirmities of age, and giving due admiration to the growth of the young. She had to make a long visit to John and Nanny Dent. She delighted them with an account of Alice's improvement and her happiness, and patiently heard how "Sir Henry had made out" the money which their son had consigned to some English merchant, and how Alice was now an heiress, worth five hundred pounds.

"But she was always a little lady," added Nanny, "and now, with such a fortin, she may hold up her head with the best."

The interest of her little fortune could not be applied for the benefit of the old people till Alice was of age; but they had not a desire beyond that of seeing their grand-daughter provided for, and of living near her at the lodge, which Mrs. Ainsworth had offered them, at the Priory.

"Very lucky, indeed," said Nanny; "for John is getting now quite silly, and is good for nought but sitting in our chimney-nook."

Their next visit was to Nelly Butler and her little flock. They found the old woman as brisk and loquacious as ever, scolding her scholars, as she picked the dead leaves off her rose-tree, which was expected to produce, as usual, a rose for Mr. Melville on Christmas day.

"Well now, Miss, we are right glad to have you back;" exclaimed the good woman. "I was sure you

would tire of schooling; it is unthankful work. Lasses never will mind things as they ought, 'specially making button-holes. And then, Miss, the needles they break! Enough to drive a young thing like you quite out of your mind. And so, Miss, they say that black-looking, proud thing, Alice Dent, is to follow you yonder at Wolstan. Set her up, indeed! What is she to know about schooling young ladies?"

"No, Mrs. Butler," said Laura, "you are quite wrong. Alice does not pretend to be a governess. She is only studying at the Priory, that she may be able to read to Mrs. Ainsworth."

"Read—I say read!" answered the vexed old lady. "What can she know about reading, that never had a quarter's schooling? Talk of reading, you shall hear a bit of reading, ladies. Nelly Golding, give us your chapter."

Nelly stood up, Bible in hand, while Laura and her aunt nerved themselves for the trial. They had little faith in Nelly's ability; and, moreover, with a true reverence for the holy book, Laura had doubts of the wisdom of Mrs. Butler's selections.

The chapter, unhappily chosen, was the tenth of Nehemiah. The dexterity with which the girl made her rapid and reckless way through the crabbed Hebrew names, regardless of orthography or prosody, would have appalled a learned Rabbi. It was truly an exercise in the unknown tongues, but highly satisfactory to the old woman, who, looking round to gather the applause of her visitors, said with great complacency—

"Not that I take all the credit to myself, ladies. I always boggle at them hard names. But Mr. Dilworth,—a wonderful man he is!—noticed how sharp Nelly was with his questions, so he learns her a bit every day; and I think she's fit for a reader any day, when such as Alice Dent can get a place."

Laura hinted that Mrs. Butler had herself taught Alice to read, and touched the old woman's feelings by alluding to the orphan state of the girl. The mortification of the venerable teacher was somewhat subdued, and at last relenting, she agreed that it was "a bit of good luck for the poor lass." She then insisted on directing Laura's attention to the improvement that two years had wrought in her favourite pupils; an irksome task, which four or five years earlier Laura would have avoided by any sacrifice of politeness and good-nature; but she had now learned to endure. She listened to the end, and got off, with a headache indeed, but with the gratification of feeling that the poor old woman had been rendered happy by the concession.

Two days before Christmas-day, Lady Seymour's carriage came to convey Laura and her aunt to Seymour House. What an event was their arrival! Harry Beverley handed them from the carriage, and Minna was ready to carry off her friend to the dear old room in the nursery-gallery. Laura forgot the poverty, the mortifications, the vexations she had endured, since she saw it last, and said to her old friend,—

"Dear, dear Minna, how I rejoice to be here once more! I am carried back to the days when I was the

naughty Laura Temple, whom you taught to know the value of truth and gentleness. Let us sit by this cheerful fire, and talk of the past, and, as far as we may, of the future."

But Minna declared that they must wait till bedtime for their "chat," for Lord and Lady Beverley were below, and waiting anxiously to see Miss Laura Temple. Laura felt a little confusion; for a remnant of her old spirit of romance induced her to fancy that Harry had prevailed on his father and mother to intercede for him. She began to call up all her nerve to decline, with due respect, the proposed honour; but a moment's reflection convinced her, that the peer and peeress would never consent to their son's marriage with one who had been a governess, and was the daughter of an insolvent banker. So she dressed herself quietly, and went down without embarrassment, to meet the assembled party—the Beverleys, and her old acquaintances, Colonel and Mrs. Fermor. Arthur Wilmot, with Mr. Temple and Godfrey, were not expected till after Christmas-day.

Colonel Fermor was, if possible, rather more deaf and more eccentric than he was four years before. His lady was certainly more deeply rouged, and more gossiping.

The Beverleys were very gracious, and after the first greetings, his lordship said: "Have you heard, Miss Temple, that we have lost good old Dr. Bellingham? He died yesterday morning."

Laura had not heard the news, and was as sorry as the occasion required. Her acquaintance with the

Doctor was slight, and mingled with no pleasing reminiscences.

"We have already nominated our new vicar, a particular friend of yours, Miss Temple;" said Lady Beverley.

"Who can it be?" thought Laura. She could not believe that Lady Beverley, who certainly would take upon herself the disposal of the benefice, had bestowed it on Godfrey, in whom she had never manifested any interest. And besides, there were college livings not inferior in value to Wolstan, which he had reason to expect.

"At the request of my son," continued Lady Beverley, "we have nominated his friend, Mr. Wilmot, to the living; a most remarkable piece of good fortune for a young man in his position, for it must be above eight hundred a year."

Laura blushed, and felt some embarrassment, as Lady Beverley addressed the communication with significant smiles to her. She, however, soon recovered herself, and declared with warmth, that she heartily rejoiced that Arthur Wilmot was now able to carry out all his benevolent plans. But how Lady Beverley had been induced to do this good action, was a mystery to Laura; and even Harry Beverley could not account for the promptness with which his request, made almost hopelessly, had been granted.

But the truth was, that when Harry preferred a petition in behalf of his friend, he communicated to Lord Beverley his own attachment to Laura Temple,

and his unsuccessful proposal. Harry added that he believed Arthur Wilmot was likewise in love with Laura, and would be more fortunate in his suit, if he were in a position to address her.

His lordship was much alarmed at the narrow escape of the house of Beverley from being represented by a governess, the daughter of a commoner and a banker. "Harry," said he, as his son expected; "Harry, I must consult Lady Beverley. We must take your request into consideration." So saying, he hurried to reveal to her ladyship the perilous fancy of her son.

"He must never marry her!" exclaimed the angry mother. "But what shall we do? She cannot seriously intend to refuse Harry. She will certainly accept him, if he renew his offer."

"Harry believes," said Lord Beverley, "that a sort of engagement exists between young Wilmot and Miss Temple; but that they cannot marry till he obtains some preferment."

"Then we must give him Wolstan, Lord Beverley," said the lady, "and he must marry the young lady immediately. The Durhams, it is true, will be disappointed, for I half-promised that Augustus should have the living; but he would never have consented to live so far from town, so we have no loss in him. And besides, we must consider that the present alarming dilemma sufficiently justifies our decision."

Lord Beverley liked Arthur Wilmot, and had really wished to give him the living, hoping that the young clergyman would do good in a parish which his lordship

was conscious that he had himself neglected; but the peer was a man of no energy of will, and was afraid of doing even a good action on his own responsibility. His management of this affair had been somewhat diplomatic. He acquiesced in his lady's proposal, as if it had been a happy thought of her own, and hurried to communicate the result to Harry, lest any change should occur in her decision. He, however, prudently suppressed any allusion to his ingenious device, which he knew would have been revolting to Harry's high spirit and love of truth.

It was not long before Arthur learned, with astonishment and delight, that he was to be vicar of Wolstan. Harry, in announcing the fact, magnanimously added, "and the vicarage is preparing for you and Laura."

And now, at Seymour-house, Laura and Harry talked cheerfully of Arthur's augmented means of doing good in the neglected part of his parish.

"We have dismissed the old, useless, drunken school-master," said Henry; "and now, Laura, can you recommend a steady fellow, willing to enter into the lion's den, and attempt the taming of the cubs?"

"We will search among Mr. Dilworth's youths," said Laura; "he may have a graduate fit for the office."

"None of those Xenophon fellows," said Harry. "We want no classics; nothing beyond slates and spelling-books."

"There was an awkward youth," replied Laura, "who had fallen in his master's esteem by condescending to teach the vernacular. If he still be in

office, he is your man. We will go to-morrow, and consult Mr. Dilworth on the matter."

Colonel Fermor now approached. "Oh, Miss Temple!" said the veteran, "I remember you very well,—a great admirer of heroes; all young ladies are conquered by heroes. Many a victory did our great Duke gain, which never appeared in his despatches." Then bowing to Laura, the old soldier turned away, muttering audibly, "Yes, yes, a very conceited girl. Talked Italian with a grand air, and fancied she knew every thing better than every body."

Mrs. Fermor rushed to the rescue. "You are thinking of Miss Greville, colonel," screamed the lady in her husband's ear. Then lowering her voice she added, "His memory is utterly gone, Miss Temple. He makes shocking mistakes."

She then went on aloud, "This is the daughter of the pretty Miss Vavasour, colonel, whom we used to think so like the lovely Princess Mary,—the Duchess of Gloucester now, Miss Seymour; you would see her at court."

"Yes, I remember her," answered Minna with a smile, "a most agreeable looking old lady; but Laura's mama was very beautiful. I cannot fancy that there could ever be any resemblance between her and the Duchess of Gloucester."

"I beg your pardon, Miss Seymour," said the old lady, rather sharply; "when I was presented, it would have been difficult to meet with such a group of fine ~~women~~ as the princesses; but the Princess Mary was

the flower,—she was indeed beautiful! The Prince of Wales used to say, that his sister Mary always reminded him of an angel, and the Prince was a man of fine taste. He was afterwards George the Fourth, young ladies,—a very handsome man, but, to be sure, a little wild. The common people, in his latter days, often hooted him in the streets, as if he had been one of themselves, and not a king. In truth, his gracious Majesty seldom ventured to drive through the streets, as our present Queen does, God bless her! with scarcely any guards about her.”

“Guards!” exclaimed the colonel, who had caught the word; “a very useless set. Never saw any service except at Waterloo, and then we could have done very well without them. A silly thing to send them there;—they might as well have sent a regiment of lads from a boarding-school, ladies. *We* won the day. And they got medals, too, and cheaply they earned them. I took out eight hundred picked fellows, and brought home a hundred and fifty, with not a sound man among them. Do you hear that, Charles Seymour?”

Charles Seymour had very often heard it. He was the colonel’s godson and favourite, and had determined to enter the army, to the great contentment of his godfather.

“And thus,” said Lady Seymour, in explaining to Laura the meaning of the colonel’s appeal to Charles Seymour, “thus perish my hopes of seeing him vicar of Templeton. Mr. Melville has long had the promise of a deanery, but some years may elapse before a vacancy

occurs. If Charles had shown any wish to enter the Church, it would indeed have been a pleasure to have him near us. But we were far from holding out to him the benefice as a temptation to undertake the sacred ministry. He must have been fully convinced that such was his vocation, before he entered on it. He has chosen another and a perilous way of life, and I must submit. As for the living of Templeton, I have another dear friend in my eye, if he can be persuaded to come to us."

Laura's heart palpitated, for she thought that, without giving way to romantic hopes, she might believe that Lady Seymour alluded to her brother. She was right; but further discussion of the subject would have been premature, she therefore turned the conversation to other topics. In spite of Colonel Fermor's tedious questions, his *mal-a-propos* asides, and Mrs. Fermor's obsolete gossip, Laura felt that this was one of the happiest evenings of her life.

CHAPTER XIX.

Christmas, the joyous period of the year!
Now with bright holly all the temples strew;
With laurel green, and sacred mistletoe.

GAY.

THE next morning was bright and frosty, inviting to walk, and the young people set out for the village. Miss Temple and Minna went to make arrangements for an entertainment to the school-children, on Christmas eve. Laura and Caroline Seymour, attended by Harry Beverley, proceeded to call on Mr. Dilworth, whom they found reading a dilapidated Virgil as a holyday recreation.

"*Puella doctissima*," said the old man, bowing to Laura, with a slightly satirical smile on his face, "which, in the vulgar signifies, 'most learned unmarried lady,' I hail with joy your return to the true vocation of your sex; that is to say, the hemming of muslin, the playing of music, and the regulation of Nelly Butler's school-girls. You have discovered your incompetency, Miss Laura. It was quite a mistake. The feminine gender, albeit useful after their kind, are quite inadequate to the tuition of the male sex. They must not pretend to wield the sceptre of their rulers. 'The masculine gen-

der is more worthy than the feminine,' &c. You remember that, Mr. Beverley?"

"Ah, Mr. Dilworth!" said Harry, "*nous avons changé tout cela*. The fair sex are pressing hard upon us. Depend on it, our throne is tottering. They already have their colleges, and make such good use of them, that they will probably soon usurp our pulpits, if not our swords."

"Fear not," said the old man complacently; "our empire is from the beginning, and can never be disturbed."

"But, Mr. Dilworth," interrupted Harry, weary of his pompous declamation, "we came to consult you about another matter. Can you supply us with an English teacher, ready for action, prepared by your own skilful hand?"

"Not by my hand," answered he solemnly, "I meddle not with the lower grades of learning. We are strictly classical. But Mr. Hall, an unambitious man, presides over the minor matters of the academy."

"Perhaps you would give him up to us," said Henry; "he has had some experience, and knows how to handle a rod, and work out a sum in multiplication."

"I regret exceedingly, Mr. Beverley," said the schoolmaster, "that you do not wish to soar above the vulgar routine in your academy. Why should you exclude the noble tongues of enlightened Greece and imperial Rome?"

"Because our scholars have not learned their A B C," answered Harry, rather impatiently. "Give us Mr.

Hall, to teach them this necessary step to all learning, and we will dispense with Greek and Latin at present."

"As you will, Mr. Beverley," replied Mr. Dilworth; "I abandon Mr. Hall to you. Any dunce will fill his place here. He is but a necessary evil in my establishment."

With some difficulty the visitors extricated themselves from the old man, and sought out Mr. Hall, who gratefully accepted their offer.

This important mission accomplished, the party returned home laden with evergreens to decorate the great hall for the village-children's festival. The gentlemen went to Wolstan Priory to dine, and returned the next morning, accompanied by the young Ainsworths. Herbert proudly bestrode his pony, and Carlos, who had been prevailed on to join them, mounted on a beautiful barb, a present from Mr. Ainsworth, with his scarlet *poncho* floating behind as he galloped along, was once more that model of grace in action, a Guacho of the Pampas mounted on his horse.

In the carriage were the happy little girls, with Alice, whose place in Mrs. Ainsworth's room the kind governess had taken. The young orphan was thus enabled to visit her grandfather and grandmother, and enjoy the festivities. Though Laura had been but a short time separated from the little Ainsworths, they had a world of trifles to tell her;—above all, that they liked Mrs. Keith rather better than before, and Carlos very much indeed. The South American had lost much of his shyness, and had begun to love the company of

the children, and especially that of Alice, who, by conversing with him, had recalled some of the Spanish taught her by her mother. The warm blood which they both inherited, was a bond of kindred, and they talked together of the days of their youth in the strange lands which they had left without regret, and wished to see no more.

"But, Miss Seymour," cried Herbert, "these green bowers are very fine; but you don't expect that ~~we~~ we are going to dance with the school-girls? I thought we were to have some fun,—snap-dragon, or blindman's-buff, or acting charades. I'm a capital hand at that."

"All in good time, Herbert," answered Minna. "You shall have fun; but we must let the poor children, who know nothing of acting charades, have their fun too."

Herbert was only half satisfied. He had a vague notion, that if the report of his having danced with village girls should reach Mount Green school, his dignity might suffer.

The eve of Christmas passed off very pleasantly, for every body was determined to be agreeable. The party dined at an early hour, that they might have time for the dance, and a genuine Christmas dinner it was,—baron of beef, boar's head, plum-pudding, and rich mince-pies. Old and young were children alike, and enjoyed the good things.

In the mean time, the children of the schools were seated at tea in the hall, with plum-cakes *à discretion*, which they lingered over in protracted enjoyment, till

the party from the dining-room joined them. The brilliantly lighted hall, its bowery decorations, and the happy faces it contained, formed a pleasing picture; and every body allowed that Aunt Temple's shepherdess costume for the scholars was a complete success.

After the tables were removed, the village band sounded their joyous notes, and the merry clatter of rudely shod feet commenced. Laura thought of her first ball at Seymour House, and acknowledged to herself that she was much happier now, though the scene before her bore no resemblance to Aladdin's palace, in her sobered imagination.

Among the happiest of the party, was kind Aunt Temple, dressed in the style she loved, flowing white muslin with pink ribbons. She looked so fair and gentle in the decay of her beauty, that no one felt inclined even to smile at her somewhat fantastic attire.

"Miss Temple," said Harry Beverley to her, bowing very low, "I am your slave. I pronounce you this night the queen of beauty; and if any discourteous knight deny your supremacy, I defy him to the combat *à l'outrance*. There lies my gauntlet," added he, throwing down his glove.

Miss Temple laughed at Harry's chivalrous rhapsody, and, taking his arm, they joined the merry dancers. Carlos, who had been struck mute with wonder and delight at the novel and animated scene, was now excited by the music, rude and boisterous as it was, and, taking the hand of Alice, he joined in the amusement. The villagers in admiration paused to mark the elegant

forms of the wild Guacho and the Anglo-Spanish girl, as they floated with untutored grace in the dance. It was the real poetry of motion,—their movements gave expression to the music. Laura whispered to Harry, "Sure never a hall such a galliard did grace."

"Never, indeed," said he; "I think that we cannot do better than 'match our fair cousin with young Lochinvar.'"

Laura shook her head; but Harry declared in an oracular manner, that "Time works wonders," a proposition which she did not feel inclined to deny, when she looked at his happy countenance. She thought, with perhaps a slight shade of mortification, that in Harry's case time had had an easy task.

The ball went on with unabated merriment, till the elder party were fatigued with the heat and noise, for the rustics could not be said to trip it on the light fantastic toe. The young ones were left to their enjoyment, and Herbert continued to fulfil his duties to the last, dancing even with Mrs. Butler's scholar *par excellence*, Nelly Golding.

On Christmas-day, Alice visited her grandmother. She was accompanied by Carlos, who felt out of place in the elegant and crowded rooms at Seymour-house, and enjoyed the freedom of the cottage. In the evening, Laura, with the younger Ainsworths, and Seymours, went to drink tea with the old people. Words cannot express the pride and pleasure of Nanny, as she received "the quality" in her clean and cheerful room, ~~received~~ out her dainties, and insisted on waiting on her

young friends. She looked with delight on her elegant grand-daughter making tea, and enjoyed the praises of her rich cakes, which she assured Laura were of Alice's own making; "Thanks to you, Miss, who got her larned to set her hand to such things, up at Templeton Court yonder."

Even Carlos partook of the novel repast with pleasure, and when the young Seymours asked if plum-cakes were ever seen in the Pampas, he smiled, his heart opened to their frank and kind manners, and he soon won their attention by stories of his early days.

"But, Carlos," said Annabella Ainsworth, "did you ever see a real lion or a tiger walking about quite wild?"

"Many a lion have I caught with my lasso," replied he, "and pierced with my spear; and I have struck the jaguar in his den. Well do I remember that once, night after night, the noblest horse of the corral was taken. We watched and marked a jaguar as he sprung on the back of my brother Ferdinand's favourite steed. The jaguar struck the horse's head with his powerful paw, broke his neck, and dragged his prey off towards his den. Ferdinand, the eldest and boldest of my brothers, determined to punish the plunderer. We set off with two of our best dogs, and our knives and spears. We reached the jaguar's lair, when we knew that he would be gorged with food. We sent our dogs in, and my brother facing the den, knelt down with his long spear firmly planted to receive the spring. For some time he refused to stir. We urged our dogs to assail

him. He at last made a sudden rush, and received the point of the spear in his mouth; but the end snapped off, and the beast springing upon Ferdinand, threw him to the ground. His murderous paw was already on my brother's throat, and his eyes flashing with rage, when my spear pierced his heart, and he fell dead upon his intended victim.

"I have still that jaguar's skin. It was the saddle-cloth of my horse on the terrible night of my misfortunes. I keep it in memory of my murdered brother."

He covered his eyes with his hands, and it was some time before the affectionate entreaties of Herbert, and the tears of the young ladies, recalled the young Gaucho to himself, and to a grateful consciousness of his present security and happiness.

The next day Laura's happiness was increased by the arrival of her father and brother, speedily followed by that of Arthur Wilmot, looking almost handsome in the excitement of love and hope.

It was not long before a mutual confidence was established between Godfrey Temple and Arthur Wilmot. Godfrey could now have a living, but its value was only five hundred a year. The question was,—could he with such an income, slender even with the addition of his own little estate, ask Sir Henry Seymour to bestow his daughter on him? Mr. Temple, who was now honourably released from all claims, and had still a handsome property, wished to augment his son's income; but this tax on his father, Godfrey steadily refused.

It was then Arthur's turn to speak of his improved prospects, and to discuss with Godfrey the probability of the beautiful and accomplished Laura Temple accepting the plain, awkward Arthur Wilmot. Each exerted his eloquence to encourage the other, and at length they summoned courage to present themselves before the authorities. It is scarcely needful to say that they were favourably received and recommended to the tender mercies of their respective fair ones, who did not prove hard-hearted, but without affectation accepted the simple homes offered to them by the two good and amiable young men. They willingly consented to live out of the gay world, to share the onerous duties of their husbands, and help to diffuse light and comfort in the dark habitations of the ignorant and needy.

It was not long before the engagements were made public in that happy Christmas circle, and great was the sensation which the news caused. It was a marvellous thing to the younger ladies, and very pleasant withal, to prepare for a real wedding,—an event much better than a Christmas party, inasmuch as weddings but seldom occur in families. Charles Seymour and Herbert differed with their sisters in this opinion. The gentlemen decided that there would not be half the fun,—neither mince-pies nor snap-dragon; nothing but fine dresses and silver favours that nobody cared for. The best thing about it was the wedding-cake, which was a real good thing.

Harry Beverley looked a little disconsolate, as in duty bound. Drawing Laura on one side, while Minna

and Godfrey were performing a long sonata for flute and pianoforte, and the juveniles were enjoying a round game at cards, he said, getting up a faint sigh,—

“You are quite right, Laura. There can be no comparison between such a capital fellow as Arthur Wilmot and a heedless dog like me. You were always far above me, and would soon have lost all patience with me. But I ought to marry, as I have made up my mind to live at the Manor, and,—would you believe it, Laura?—I am about to fall in love again.”

“To be sure, Harry,” replied Laura; “any body may see that you are in love with Caroline, and an excellent choice you have made this time. You have luckily met with a kindred soul in this wide world. Carry is a noble, warm-hearted girl, and born to an inheritance of more good sense than I have accumulated in years of painful labour and bitter experience. But, Harry, you are hardly yet sedate enough for a husband, and Carry is so very young.”

“Oh, how wise we are become, since we were betrothed to a pillar of the church!” cried Harry. “*Dame de paroisse* already. And do you fancy, that ‘because you are virtuous, there shall be no more cakes and ale?’”

“No wresting Shakspeare from his integrity,” replied Laura. “And remember, he also says, ‘how poor are they who want patience.’”

“I’ll to my lady mother,” said he; “surely she will allow her own brother’s daughter to be a fitting match for the heir of the house of Beverley.”

But Harry did not succeed so happily as the rest of his friends. It was considered that Caroline was but seventeen, and that Harry had not been remarkable for discretion and firmness of purpose. Lady Seymour, therefore, insisted that no engagement should bind the young lovers; but it was intimated that if, at the end of two years, their affections were unchanged, there would probably be no objection to their union.

"Two years!" murmured the discontented young gentleman. "As if two years were a thing of naught. I shall be greyheaded in two years, Aunt Seymour, and shall have taken to whist; and Carry will wear turbans, and sit at the pianoforte playing polkas for the young people. It is a barbarous decision."

But it was the law. So Harry was compelled to submit; and, as he was by no means given to melancholy, he made the best of it. The Christmas party continued to be as noisy and merry as only Christmas parties are privileged to be, notwithstanding the occasional abstraction of the several pairs of lovers.

Mrs. Fermor's loud and circumstantial announcement of these happy events to the colonel, created considerable embarrassment. His congratulations, delivered with old-fashioned courtesy, would have been pleasant enough, if he had not imparted his real opinions in his usual stage-whisper.

"Strange thing how girls are changed! In my days the red-coats had it; but now any fellow with a black coat and white neckcloth can win them. Bad taste! they might as well fall in love with the butler."

P

But the young ladies seemed perfectly content with their black-coated lovers, and resorted to each other's dressing-room fire at bed-time, to concert schemes for the improvement of their respective parishes, in which schemes Laura's sanguine temperament and vivid imagination oft needed the check of Minna's good sense.

It was finally settled that the weddings should take place at Easter. Laura in the meantime was to remain at Seymour House. Mr. Temple set out to inspect Godfrey's future home, and to secure a house for Miss Temple and himself, as near as possible to his son's residence. He succeeded in finding a pretty mansion about half-way between the two rectories, and made both his children happy by purchasing it.

CHAPTER XX.

Without the home that plighted love endears,
Without the smile from partial beauty won,
O what were man? A world without a sun!

CAMPBELL.

AND so time passed on, and the momentous Easter came; and all the members of all the families were gathered together, and were facetious, and liberal in presents and good counsel, as friends and relatives are wont to be on such occasions. Much champagne was drunk, many speeches made, and many tears shed, and finally the brides and bridegrooms whirled off perfectly happy, and the rest of the company for the rest of the day were dull and flat, as is also the custom on such occasions. We would except Harry Beverley, who could not be dull. He persisted in talking to Caroline of the capabilities of the Manor, and induced her to sketch a plan for a magnificent conservatory after her own taste, to be added forthwith to his mansion, furnishing at once employment for his superabundant activity, and a shadowy encouragement to his hopes.

What more can be said of these favourites of fortune, now about to commence the journey of life under the most favourable auspices? Doubtless some trials and

sorrows were still to be endured, to fit them for nobler aspirations; but here we leave them to their hour of happiness, concluding with Laura's letter to her friend, after she had been some months married.

“ Wolstan Rectory to Merton Parsonage, greeting.

“ To our well-beloved brother and sister, the grave vicar and gentle dame of Merton aforesaid.

“ How does my dear Minna accommodate herself to the fall from the splendours of Seymour-house to the quiet obscurity of the pretty, cottage-like parsonage of Merton, whose bowers of lilac and laburnum struggle to conceal those useful plebeians of the garden, the apple-tree and gooseberry-bush? And how does she like the lecturing of the naughty, and satisfying the discontented, and ruling the maidens, and obeying the master?

“ Ah, dear Minna! you were born for all this, and fortunate is the parish of Merton to have Godfrey the learned for its pastor, and Minna the peerless for its Lady Bountiful. In the spirit of my bye-gone days I fancy you waving the wand of wisdom, while order, and harmony, and love spring up before you. I shall never be able to accomplish such wonders, for—I cannot wield the wand.

“ Arthur believes that I make some progress in wisdom, dear credulous fellow; but I have secret doubts myself, for I am given to wander into strange errors. Would you believe it?—That crafty man, John Gregg, who unites the congenial occupations of preacher and

butcher, on my first day's attempt at housekeeping, cajoled me into ordering a supply of meat sufficient for Seymour-house? Never shall I forget my poor cook's consternation when she summoned me into the larder to view my purchases, nor my own feelings of shame and mortification. I ventured to mutter something about *curing*, assuming an air of profound knowledge, but Betty tore away the veil at once. 'Lord, Madam, we never cure quarters of lamb and necks of mutton!' I was compelled to make the best of it, to throw aside my airs of pretence, and trust, as I ought to have done at first, to the experience of kind Mrs. Wilmot. She neither chid me nor ridiculed me; but quietly gave away our surplus, and sketched for me a plan of supplies for the future, on a more economical scale. Thus my first attempt at management turned out for the benefit of the poor.

"I have committed some little blunders since, such as wearing out even Arthur's patience with repeated legs of lamb for dinner, because I could not remember any thing else; but the experience of months has made me thoughtful, and I arrange matters now, I fancy, rather gracefully.

"The schools are successful *à merveille*. Mr. Hall, the despised of Templeton Grammar-school, is a *rara avis*. He does all that Arthur wishes him to do, and more. His gentle mode of teaching not only makes his flock submissive, but even desirous of those insipid draughts, the rudiments of reading, writing, and arithmetic.

"The schoolmistress is an excellent young woman ; but, being from the south of England, she is a little fastidious about the children's pronunciation, and somewhat given to diversify the dull labours of stitching and knitting, by the introduction of curious devices in knitted-lace and crochet-work, attempts that would raise the grey hairs of Nelly Butler in wrath and amazement. I intercede for a groundwork of plain sewing ; but the girls are so fond of Miss Anne and her novelties, that Arthur thinks I had better leave her to herself a while.

"Harry Beverley is delighted with our progress, and we begin to hope much from the gradual spread of education ; but an adult population is slow to improve. Arthur, however, has a congregation, and his congregation contend that ' he beats John Gregg at preaching ; ' but there is a powerful opposition, only to be subdued by man's energy and God's grace.

"Mrs. Ainsworth often accompanies me in my visits to the cottages, and even scolds and scoffers are appalled and silenced at the sight of her affliction, her scarred and disfigured face, and her patient meekness. How much moral beauty is there in her distorted but resigned countenance, and how contemptible mere personal charms appear in the comparison ! She is, I believe, happy ; but she tells me that she has seasons of remorse for the wasted hours of her life. And who has not such seasons ? How often I look back with a hudder at my barren and unprofitable youth, and the wild and perilous path which my presumption had

selected. I thank God that, through the agency of the good genii at Seymour-house, I was enabled to see and grapple with and subdue the habits that held me captive. I shrank from the beauty of truth;—the simplicity of the sculptured marble was repulsive to me, and I loved to clothe it with tinseled drapery.

“If I have any children, dear Minna, my first care shall be to instil into their minds a holy reverence for Truth.

‘Woe to those who train such youth,
And fail to press the rights of truth.’

“But I am castle-building again, Minna; and that I ought not to do, when I look on my dear husband, with his whole mind devoted to the mission which he holds; for he believes that one called, as he has been, to the holy office,

‘Should have his souls affections all absorb’d
In that majestic purpose, and press on
To its fulfilment, as a mountain-born
And mighty stream, with all its vassal rills,
Sweeps proudly to the ocean, pausing not
To dally with the flowers.’

“And that she may be enabled to aid him in his labour of love, is the earnest prayer of my dear Minna’s faithful sister-in-law,

“LAURA WILMOT.”

THE END.

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